



APPENDIX 9.1  
LOCH TOFTINGALL BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

*Archaeological Desk-based Assessment  
for Boralex*

04/08/2023

# LOCH TOFTINGALL BESS

## *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*

*for Boralex*

*August 2023*

*Ver 1.4*

HA Job no.: P19-024  
NGR: 318225, 951905 (centred)  
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Council: Caithness

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## CONTENTS

1.....	INTRODUCTION .....	4
1.2.	SITE DESCRIPTION .....	4
1.3.	GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY .....	4
2.....	LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE.....	5
2.1.	STATUTORY PROTECTION.....	5
2.2.	NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY.....	5
2.3.	LOCAL PLANNING POLICY.....	6
2.4.	GUIDANCE .....	7
2.5.	PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	7
3.....	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	9
4.....	METHODOLOGY .....	10
4.1.	TERMINOLOGY – ‘CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE’ AND ‘IMPORTANCE’ .....	10
4.2.	IDENTIFICATION OF HERITAGE ASSETS THAT MAY BE AFFECTED .....	10
4.3.	LIMITATIONS OF BASELINE DATA .....	11
4.4.	ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE.....	12
5.....	RESULTS .....	14
5.1.	OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT .....	14
5.2.	FIELD RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY .....	14
5.3.	PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS.....	15
5.4.	HISTORIC MAPPING AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW .....	16
5.5.	HISTORIC LAND-USE ASSESSMENT (HLA) .....	16
5.6.	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVE .....	16
6.....	STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE .....	19
6.1.	KNOWN AND POTENTIAL HERITAGE ASSETS .....	19
	REFERENCES.....	20
	ANNEX 1: KNOWN HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN THE STUDY AREA .....	21

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1. This report was commissioned by Boralex and presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) which informs the cultural heritage elements of an Environmental Report, produced in support of a planning application to construct an energy storage system in currently commercial forestry at the Moss of Toftingall. The c.40.6-hectare site is located at NGR 318225, 951905 (post code KW1 5XU), and the nearest settlement is Spittal (2.3km north-west).
- 1.1.2. The Proposed Development comprises a battery energy storage system (BESS) and associated infrastructure with access via the Halsary Wind Farm to the south-west. The project description is presented in chapter 4 of the Environmental Report.
- 1.1.3. This report describes and assesses the cultural heritage significance and importance of known heritage assets and potential archaeological remains within the Site Boundary. This will inform the Environmental Report cultural heritage chapter which aims to identify environmental effects of the Proposed Development on the cultural significance of heritage assets.
- 1.1.4. With the agreement of consultees, consideration of the setting of heritage assets in the Study Area is scoped out of the assessment due to the nature and anticipated limited visibility of the Proposed Development in the wider landscape.
- 1.1.5. This report is suitable for submission in support of a planning application, identifies potential heritage constraints for the scheme in accordance with the requirements of national and local planning policies with respect to consideration of the historic environment in the planning process (see Part 2).

### 1.2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.2.1. The Site is located at NGR 318225, 951905 (post code KW1 5XU), approximately 2.3km south east of Spittal and 6.3km south-west of Watten, in the parish of Watten, Caithness. It measures c.40.6ha in area and is irregularly shaped. The proposed BESS is located at NGR 317623, 951915. The route of the proposed access runs east from the A9 and turns northwards into the Site through the existing Halsary Wind Farm.
- 1.2.2. The land use within the Site Boundary currently comprises commercial forestry, in which all boundaries lie. To the east is the Loch of Toftingall. The topography of the Site slopes from 90m AOD at the west, down to 80m AOD in the east, in the direction of the loch.

### 1.3. GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY

- 1.3.1. The bedrock geology within the Site is sedimentary, comprising Spital Flagstone Formation - Siltstone, Mudstone and Sandstone.
- 1.3.2. Superficial deposits are recorded as Peat (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). The National Soil Map of Scotland records this as Dystrophic blanket peat ([https://map.environment.gov.scot/Soil\\_maps/](https://map.environment.gov.scot/Soil_maps/)).

## 2. LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

### 2.1. STATUTORY PROTECTION

2.1.1. The relevant heritage legislation in the context of the Site is described in Table 1.

*Table 1. Historic Environment Statutory Legislation (Scotland)*

Legislation	Key Issues
Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014	The Act defines the role of the public body, Historic Environment Scotland (HES), and the processes for the designation of heritage assets, consents and rights of appeal.
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979	It is a criminal offence to carry out any works on or near to a Scheduled Monument without Scheduled Monument Consent. Development must preserve in-situ protected archaeological remains and landscapes of acknowledged significance and protect their settings.
The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997	Provides for statutory protection of listed buildings and conservation areas. No physical works can be carried out in relation to a listed building and its curtilage without listed building consent. It introduces a requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting in considering any Development which may affect these. In conservation areas, the designation introduces general controls to conserve character and appearance within the conservation area.
Protection of Military Remains Act (1986)	Outlines the criteria for designating a military crash site. Certain activities are prohibited at protected sites, without the authority of the Ministry of Defence.
Scots Common Law	The movement or disturbance of human remains without lawful authority is illegal. Any human remains should be reported to the local police or Procurator Fiscal's office. Further disturbance must cease until permission to continue has been granted by the legal authorities.

### 2.2. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 2.2.1. The historic environment is defined as “the physical evidence for human activity that connects people with place, linked with the associations we can see, feel and understand” and includes “individual assets, related settings and the wider cultural landscape” (‘Our Place in Time: The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland’ (2015)). This document presents the Scottish Government’s strategy for the protection and promotion of the historic environment.
- 2.2.2. NPF4 Part 1 A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045 describes how the future spatial development of Scotland can contribute to planning outcomes. It shows where there will be opportunities for growth and regeneration, investment in the low carbon economy, environmental enhancement, and improved connections across the country.
- 2.2.3. Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) defines the Historic Environment and Scottish Government Policy. It sets out the vision and key principles on how to care for and protect Scotland’s historic environment including designations of ancient monuments, principles for scheduling and listing, contexts for conservation areas, marine protected areas, gardens and designated landscapes, historic

battlefields and consents and advice. HEPS provides further policy direction to NPF4 and sets out high level policies and core principles for decision-making affecting the historic environment.

- 2.2.4. The Scottish Government's planning policies in relation to the historic environment are set out in NPF4 Part 2 National Planning Policy (The Scottish Government, February 2023) Policy 7: Historic assets and places:

*"Policy Principles*

*Policy Intent: To protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places.*

*Policy Outcomes: The historic environment is valued, protected, and enhanced, supporting the transition to net zero and ensuring assets are resilient to current and future impacts of climate change; Redundant or neglected historic buildings are brought back into sustainable and productive uses; Recognise the social, environmental and economic value of the historic environment, to our economy and cultural identity.*

*Local Development Plans: LDPs, including through their spatial strategies, should support the sustainable management of the historic environment. They should identify, protect and enhance valued historic assets and places."*

- 2.2.5. NPF4 Policy 7 applies these principles to designated and non-designated assets. Those relevant to the current assessment are as follows:

NPF4 – Part 2: Historic Assets and Places Policy 7

*"a) Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place. The assessment should identify the likely visual or physical impact of any proposals for change, including cumulative effects and provide a sound basis for managing the impacts of change.*

*Proposals should also be informed by national policy and guidance on managing change in the historic environment, and information held within Historic Environment Records.*

*o) Non-designated historic environment assets, places and their setting should be protected and preserved in situ wherever feasible. Where there is potential for non-designated buried archaeological remains to exist below a site, developers will provide an evaluation of the archaeological resource at an early stage so that planning authorities can assess impacts. Historic buildings may also have archaeological significance which is not understood and may require assessment.*

*Where impacts cannot be avoided they should be minimised. Where it has been demonstrated that avoidance or retention is not possible, excavation, recording, analysis, archiving, publication and activities to provide public benefit may be required through the use of conditions or legal/planning obligations.*

*When new archaeological discoveries are made during the course of development works, they must be reported to the planning authority to enable agreement on appropriate inspection, recording and mitigation measures."*

## 2.3. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

### *LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN*

- 2.3.1. The Highland Council (THC) adopted the Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HWLDP) in April 2012. Within the HWLDP Policy 57 Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage is of relevance to this Chapter.

- 2.3.2. This policy in part states:

*"All development proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting"*

*"Council also intends to adopt the Supplementary Guidance on the Highland Historic Environment Strategy. The main principles of this guidance will ensure that:*

- *Future developments take account of the historic environment and that they are of a design and quality to enhance the historic environment bringing both economic and social benefits;*
- *It sets a proactive, consistent approach to the protection of the historic environment."*

2.3.3. In August 2018 THC adopted the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CSLDP) to be used in conjunction with the HWLDP. The CSLDP sets out a number of Key Outcomes, of relevance to this Chapter is the Key Outcome for environment and heritage:

*"High quality places where the outstanding environment and natural, built and cultural heritage is celebrated and valued assets are safeguarded"*

## 2.4. GUIDANCE

2.4.1. HES provides guidance on how to apply NPF4 Policy 7 in a series of documents entitled 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment' (MCHE). These provide guidance to planning authorities and stakeholders regarding key issues relating to development, the planning process, and key issues pertaining to the historic environment.

2.4.2. HES published Designation Policy and Selection Guidance (DPSG, 2019) to accompany HEPS. DPSG outlines the policy and selection guidance used by HES when designating sites and places of national importance.

2.4.3. Planning Advice Note (PAN) 2/2011: Planning and Archaeology provides local government officers with technical advice to planning authorities and developers on dealing with archaeological remains. Among other issues it considers the balance in planning decisions between the preservation in situ of archaeological remains and the benefits of development; setting; the circumstances under which developers can be required to provide further information, in the form of a field evaluation to allow planning authorities to reach a decision; and measures that can be taken to mitigate adverse impacts.

2.4.4. Standards and Guidance published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) have been followed in preparing this assessment, in particular the 'Standard and guidance for commissioning work or providing consultancy advice on archaeology and the historic environment' (2014, updated 2020) and the 'Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment' (2014, updated 2017 & 2020).

2.4.5. This assessment has also been prepared with reference to IEMA, IHBC and CIfA's July 2021 publication 'Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK'. This document presents good practice for assessment of the impact of a development proposal on cultural heritage assets which is consistent with the Principles.

## 2.5. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2.5.1. Headland Archaeology (UK) is a Registered Organisation with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), an audited status which confirms that all work is carried out in accordance with the highest standards of the profession.

2.5.2. Headland Archaeology (UK), as part of the RSK Group, is recognised by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) under their 'Historic Environment Service Provider Recognition' scheme. This quality assurance standard acknowledges that RSK works to the conservation standards of the IHBC, the UK's lead body for built and historic environment practitioners and specialists.

2.5.3. Headland Archaeology (UK) operates a quality management system to help ensure all projects are managed in a professional and transparent manner, which enables it to qualify for ISO 9001 (Quality Management), ISO 45001 (health and safety management) and ISO 14001 (environmental management).

2.5.4. Ordnance Survey data is produced under © Crown copyright and database rights Licence 100065113.



### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1. The aim of this DBA is to inform an Environmental Report in relation to likely environmental effects, specifically those upon the historic environment. The assessment aims to identify all known heritage assets potentially affected by the Proposed Development, and the potential for currently unknown heritage assets to be present within the Site.
- 3.1.2. The purpose is to gain an understanding of the historic environment resource in order to formulate an assessment of the potential for heritage assets to survive within the Site, their significance, and strategies for further evaluation, mitigation or management as appropriate.
- 3.1.3. The ClfA's *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* (2020) defines a DBA as '*...a programme of study of the historic environment within a specified area or site on land, the inter-tidal zone or underwater that addresses agreed research and/or conservation objectives. It consists of an analysis of existing written, graphic, photographic, and electronic information in order to identify the likely heritage assets, their interests and significance and the character of the Study Area, including appropriate consideration of the settings of heritage assets and, in England, the nature, extent and quality of the known or potential archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interest. Significance is to be judged in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate.*'
- 3.1.4. A DBA will determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent, and significance of the historic environment within a specified area, and the impact of the Proposed Development on the significance of the historic environment or will identify the need for further evaluation to do so.
- 3.1.5. The specific objectives of this DBA are therefore to:
- Collate all available written, graphic, photographic and electronic information relevant to the Site and relevant study area;
  - Describe the nature, extent and significance and importance of the historic environment within the area potentially affected by the Proposed Development, identifying any uncertainties in existing knowledge;
  - Determine the potential for previously unknown archaeological remains;
  - Identify any requirements for further investigation that may be necessary to understand the effects of the Proposed Development on the historic environment.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. TERMINOLOGY – ‘CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE’ AND ‘IMPORTANCE’

- 4.1.1. Cultural heritage impact assessment is concerned with effects on cultural significance, which is a quality that applies to all heritage assets, and as defined by Historic Environment Scotland (Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook, NatureScot & HES 2018, v5 Appendix 1 page 175), relates to the ways in which a heritage asset is valued both by specialists and the public. The cultural significance of a heritage asset will derive from factors including the asset’s fabric, setting, context and associations. This use of the word ‘significance’, referring to the range of values attached to an asset, should not be confused with the unrelated usage in EIA where the significance of an effect reflects the weight that should be attached to it in a planning decision.
- 4.1.2. Cultural significance is assessed in relation to the criteria in DPSG Annexes 1-6, which are intended primarily to inform decisions regarding heritage designations but may also be applied more generally in identifying the ‘special characteristics’ of a heritage asset, which contribute to its significance and should be protected, conserved and enhanced according to the NPF4 Policy Principles. DPSG Annex 1 is widely applicable in assessing the cultural significance of archaeological sites and monuments, for instance, while the criteria in Annex 2 can be used in defining the architectural or historic interest of buildings, whether listed or not. Cultural significance of assets is considered in terms described in DPSG Annex 1:
- *Intrinsic Characteristics- those inherent in the monument i.e., "how the physical remains of a site or place contribute to our knowledge of the past";*
  - *Contextual Characteristics – those relating to the monument's place in the landscape or in the body of existing knowledge i.e., "how a site or place relates to its surroundings and/or to our existing knowledge of the past"; and*
  - *Associative Characteristics – subjective associations, including those with current or past aesthetic preferences i.e., "how a site or place relates to people, practices, events and/or historic and social movements".*
- 4.1.3. This use of the word ‘significance’, referring to the range of values or interest attached to an asset, should not be confused with the unrelated usage in EIA where the ‘significance of an effect’ reflects the weight that should be attached to it in a planning decision.
- 4.1.4. Relative importance of each identified heritage asset potentially affected by the Proposed Development has been determined to provide a framework for comparison between different heritage assets and to inform subsequent stages of archaeological assessment and the development of any appropriate mitigation which may be required (See Table 3 below).

### 4.2. IDENTIFICATION OF HERITAGE ASSETS THAT MAY BE AFFECTED

#### STUDY AREAS

- 4.2.1. The Site Boundary corresponds with the Proposed Development Site.
- 4.2.2. All heritage assets within 1km of the Site Boundary have been identified and considered to inform the assessment of archaeological potential.

#### DATA SOURCES

- 4.2.3. The assessment has been based on a study of all readily available documentary sources, following the relevant ClfA Standards and Guidance. The following sources of information were referred to:
- Designation data downloaded from the Historic Environment Scotland website in April 2023;

- Historic Environment Record (HER) data, digital extract received from Highlands Council in March 2022;
- The National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), including the Canmore database and associated photographs, prints/drawings and manuscripts held by HES;
- Historic Landscape Assessment data, viewed through the HLAMap website;
- The National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP);
- Geological data available online from the British Geological Survey;
- Historic maps held by the National Library of Scotland;
- Unpublished maps and plans held by the National Records of Scotland;
- Relevant internet resources, including Google Maps, Google Earth, Bing satellite imagery and PastMap;
- Readily available published sources and unpublished archaeological reports.

4.2.4. All heritage assets within the Study Area are compiled in a gazetteer (Annex 1). Designated heritage assets are referenced in this report by their Historic Environment Scotland list entry number. Non-designated assets are referenced by their HER 'MonUID' Reference Number or the National Record of the Historic Environment reference. Any newly discovered assets have been assigned a number prefixed HA for 'Heritage Asset'. A single asset number can refer to a group of related features, which may be recorded separately in the HER and other data sources.

#### FIELD RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY

- 4.2.5. A field reconnaissance survey was undertaken on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 in clear weather conditions. Notes were made regarding site characteristics, any visible archaeology and geographical/geological features which may have a bearing on previous land use and archaeological survival, as well as those which may constrain subsequent archaeological investigation.
- 4.2.6. Records were made regarding extant archaeological features, such as earthworks or structural remains, any negative features, local topography and aspect, exposed geology, soils, watercourses, health and safety considerations, surface finds, and any other relevant information.

#### HISTORIC MAP REGRESSION

- 4.2.7. The historic mapping sequence corresponding with the Site Boundary was consulted to collect information on former land use and development throughout the later historic periods.

### 4.3. LIMITATIONS OF BASELINE DATA

- 4.3.1. Information held by public data sources is generally considered to be reliable; however, the following general points are noted:
- There is no LIDAR data available for the Site Boundary on the Scottish Remote Sensing Portal;
  - HER records can be limited because opportunities for research, fieldwork and discovery depend on the volume and frequency of commercial development and occasional research projects, rather than the result of a more structured research framework. A lack of data within the HER records does not necessarily equal an absence of archaeology;
  - Documentary sources are rare before the medieval period;
  - Wherever such documentary sources are used in assessing archaeological potential professional judgment is used in their interpretation;

- Where archaeological sites have been identified solely from aerial imagery without confirmation from archaeological excavation or supporting evidence in the form of find-spots for example, it is possible the interpretation may be revised in the light of further investigation;
- The significance of sites can be difficult to identify from HER records, depending on the accuracy and reliability of the original source;
- There can often be a lack of dating evidence for archaeological sites; and
- Any archaeological field reconnaissance survey has inherent limitations, primarily because archaeological remains below ground level may have no surface indicators.

## 4.4. ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

- 4.4.1. The importance of a heritage asset is the overall value assigned to it reflecting its statutory designation or, in the case of non-designated assets, the professional judgement of the assessor (Table 3).
- 4.4.2. In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook (HES, 2018, Appendix 1: Cultural heritage Impact Assessment), *'Heritage Assets are features, buildings or places that provide physical evidence of past human activity identified as being of sufficient value to this and future generations to merit consideration in the planning system'*.
- 4.4.3. Any feature which does not merit consideration in planning decisions due to its significance may be said to have negligible importance. It is the role of the professional judgements made by the assessor to identify any historic remains within the Site Boundary that are considered to be of negligible importance, which may be taken as justification for no further assessment or mitigation works on the feature.
- 4.4.4. The importance of heritage assets that may be affected by the Proposed Development is identified in the Environmental Report cultural heritage chapter's impact assessment section.

Table 2. Criteria for Assessing the Importance of Heritage Assets

Importance of the asset	Criteria
Very High (International)	World Heritage Sites and other assets of equal international importance, that contribute to international research objectives
High (National)	Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Scheduled Monuments, Protected Wreck Sites, Inventory Historic Battlefields, Category A and B Listed Buildings, Historic Marine Protected Areas, and non-designated heritage assets of equivalent importance that contribute to national research objectives
Medium (Regional)	Conservation Areas, Category C Listed Buildings, undesignated assets of regional importance except where their particular characteristics merit a higher level of importance, heritage assets on local lists and non-designated assets that contribute to Regional research objectives
Low (Local)	Locally listed heritage assets, except where their particular characteristics merit a higher level of importance, undesignated heritage assets of Local importance, including assets that may already be partially damaged
Negligible	Identified historic remains of no importance in planning considerations, or heritage assets and findspots that have already been removed or destroyed (i.e. 'site of')

Importance of the asset	Criteria
Unknown / Uncertain	Heritage assets for which a level of importance cannot be defined on current information

### POTENTIAL FOR UNKNOWN HERITAGE ASSETS

- 4.4.5. Archaeological features are often impossible to identify through desk-based assessment. The likelihood that significant undiscovered heritage assets may be present within the Proposed Development Area is referred to as *archaeological potential*. Overall levels of potential can be assigned to different landscape zones, following the criteria in Table 4, while recognising that the archaeological potential of any zone will relate to particular historical periods and types of evidence. The following factors are considered in assessing archaeological potential:
- The distribution and character of known archaeological remains in the vicinity, based principally on an appraisal of data in the HER and other data sources such as HES and Canmore;
  - The history of archaeological fieldwork and research in the surrounding area, which may give an indication of the reliability and completeness of existing records;
  - Environmental factors such as geology, topography and soil quality, which would have influenced land-use in the past and can therefore be used to predict the distribution of archaeological remains;
  - Land-use factors affecting the survival of archaeological remains, such as ploughing or quarrying; and
  - Factors affecting the visibility of archaeological remains, which may relate to both environment and land-use, such as soils and geology (which may be more or less conducive to formation of cropmarks), arable cultivation (which has potential to show cropmarks and create surface artefact scatters), vegetation, which can conceal upstanding features, and superficial deposits such as peat and alluvium which can mask archaeological features.
- 4.4.6. In the Archaeological Potential section of this report, the likelihood that the Site may contain undiscovered heritage assets, their likely location and potential density, and their likely level of importance is assessed, described, and justified.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1. OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1.1. The full list of known heritage assets within the Study Area is presented in the gazetteer (Annex 1).
- 5.1.2. The significance of these assets is discussed by period in the Statement of Significance and Importance section below.

#### *SITE BOUNDARY*

- 5.1.1. There are no known heritage assets recorded on the HER/NRHE within the Site Boundary.
- 5.1.2. Survey for this assessment has identified no heritage assets within the Site Boundary.

#### *STUDY AREA*

- 5.1.3. There are 23 known non-designated heritage assets located within the Study Area. These comprise:
- 6 prehistoric assets - 3 standing stones and 3 brochs;
  - 16 later historic period assets – 1 drove stance, 7 buildings/farmsteads/croft houses, 4 sheepfolds, 1 well, 1 settlement, 1 peat cutting and 1 enclosure; and
  - 1 modern asset – an air crash site.

### 5.2. FIELD RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY

- 5.2.1. Field reconnaissance survey of the Site identified no heritage assets.
- 5.2.2. The Site has been deep-ploughed for modern forestry activities and in addition is evidently poorly drained bog with overall negligible archaeological potential.

*Illus 1. General shot of Site*



### 5.3. PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

5.3.1. The proposed access to the Site passes through the location of two previous non-intrusive surveys:

- EHG3194 Desk-based assessment and walkover survey - Halsary Windfarm (CFA Archaeology, July 2008). Excerpt:

*"Eight sites lay within the application area, two of which were Scheduled Monuments and four of which were newly identified sites."*

The newly identified sites (4 & 6-8) comprised two farmsteads shown on historic mapping, quarry pits identified from walkover survey, and an area of peat cutting shown on aerial imagery. No heritage assets identified by this previous survey area located in the Site Boundary for the current BESS assessment.

- EHG994 DBA and walkover survey - Causeymire Wind Farm haul road (CFA Archaeology, September 2003). Excerpt:

*"The archaeological remains identified by the desk-based assessment and field survey appear to relate to a crofting settlement strung along the east side of the A9 road (sites 1, 2, 5). The crofting settlement and associated land improvements are probably of 18th or 19th century origin. The putative drovers' holding pens (site 4) and the place name evidence of Mybster (site 3) suggest activity of greater antiquity in the immediate vicinity. It is possible that buried remains of archaeological significance are present along the survey corridor. The potential for such remains to survive along the proposed development route is considered generally to be moderate or low."*

EHG994 site 5, a series of properties, probably lotted crofts, strung out along the east side of what is now the A9 identified on historic mapping, includes the area of the proposed BESS access track. (The access track was existing and upgraded as part of the Halsary Wind Farm.)



## 5.4. HISTORIC MAPPING AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY REVIEW

- 5.4.1. Two historical aerial images are available on NCAP covering the Site Boundary (listed in full in the references section of this report). These date to the 1940s and show unforested moorland with natural watercourses (Allt Eireannaich) draining towards the loch to the east. None are at a scale suitable to identify any hitherto unknown heritage assets.
- 5.4.2. Bleu's Atlas of Scotland (1654) shows Medieval settlements in the vicinity of the Site at Tochnagal [Toftingall].
- 5.4.3. Roy's Lowlands Map (1747-52) shows the Site as uncultivated hillsides. Loch Toftingall is named, as are settlements at Knockglas and Toftingall which are surrounded by fields.
- 5.4.4. William Hole's (1607), James Dorret's Map (1750) and Aaron Arrowsmith's Map (1807) are not at a scale useful to identify archaeological potential, only naming nearby settlements.
- 5.4.5. No heritage assets were identified within the Site Boundary from a review of the historic OS map sequence.

## 5.5. HISTORIC LAND-USE ASSESSMENT (HLA)

- 5.5.1. The Site is recorded by HLA as **Plantation** (20<sup>th</sup> century – present).

## 5.6. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

### *PREHISTORIC PERIODS*

- 5.6.1. The wider area of the Site is rich in prehistoric archaeological remains, some of which are scheduled and upstanding. The earliest are probable Neolithic chambered cairns such as Fairy Hillock (SM528), Bibster (SM431), Mill of Knockadee (SM468), Oslie (SM472), Gallow Hill (SM483) and Tulloch of Milton (SM499).
- 5.6.2. Within 2km of the Site evidence of prehistoric activity comprises two scheduled monuments (both brochs) and six non-designated assets. These comprise a cist burial and three standing stones and four brochs. Standing stones and funerary monuments in the wider area include ritual monuments typically dating from the Neolithic to Early Bronze Age. The absence of associated Neolithic settlement remains probably reflects the priorities of past research, or the fact that such assets were made of less substantial materials, most probably timber and turf.
- 5.6.3. The brochs date to the Iron Age. These are amongst the most prominent archaeological sites in Caithness and comprise large cylindrical drystone towers surviving up to 12m high. Although the exact function of brochs remains under debate they are often considered to be defended farmsteads with the size of the structures providing evidence of social cohesion.
- 5.6.4. Prehistoric assets within the Study Area are all located to the west of the Site and west of the A9. It is likely that the Site was marsh, unsuitable for settlement during these periods.

### *MEDIEVAL TO LATER HISTORIC PERIODS*

- 5.6.5. The early medieval period in Caithness is dominated by the Norse incursions into the area in the 9th century and their subsequent control of the area from the 10th century to early 13th century. A presence in the surrounding area is recorded in the Orkneyinga Saga. The parish name of Watten is supposedly Danish in origin, meaning water, a reference to Loch Watten.
- 5.6.6. At Spittal, north-east of the Site is a disputed battle site of Skida Mire (MHG1352), between Liotus Earl of Orkney and his brother, Sculius, for the Earldom of Caithness, during the reign of Malcolm I (943-54). Torfaeus (1866) says this is the site of the Battle, whilst the New Statistical Accounts of Scotland (NSA) (1845) says the battle took place at Kilmster in Bower parish. Other sources place the battle ground at Skitten, on the coast north east of Watten. In one translation of Torfaeus, the phrase for describing the



battle location 'near' Spittal Hill is replaced by 'south of' Spittal Hill in the second account. Whilst no definite conclusions can be reached as to its precise location, it is likely that the battle was fought over a large area. This recorded location of the battle at Toftinghall is currently an enclosed grass field alongside broch SM582 and Spittal Quarries MHG185.

- 5.6.7. Bleau's Atlas of Scotland (1654) shows Medieval settlements in the vicinity of the Site at Tochnagal [Toftingall]. The assets in the wider area are generally post-medieval in date, though some may therefore have their origins in the medieval period.
- 5.6.8. North-west of the Site lies the remains of St Magnus' Church, burial ground and hospital. The Hospital of St Magnus was mentioned in 1476 and was still in existence in 1633. The dedication is to Norse St Magnus, who was executed in 1116. The church, located on an important crossroads (the modern A9 and B870), was a resting place for pilgrims travelling to Orkney.
- 5.6.9. Highlighting the importance of the crossroads, north of the Site is Spittal Hill (Spittal was a parish until combined with Halkirk in the 16<sup>th</sup> century); the highest point in Halkirk parish, was until about 1827 a traditional meeting place. Here was held an annual market named 'the Jamesmas' according to the NSA (1845) and 'Georgemas Fair' according to the OS Name Book (1872).
- 5.6.10. From the medieval period through to the early modern period the archaeological record for the Study Area is dominated by agricultural remains consisting of small farmsteads, crofts, sheep folds, enclosures, rig and furrow, and peat cuttings. In the wider area there are the remains of industry including grain mills, water mills/dams and smithies.
- 5.6.11. Volume XI of the Old Statistical Account of Scotland published in 1794 for the Parish of Wattin [Watten] and Volume XV of the New Statistical Account of Scotland published in 1845 for the Parish of Watten identifies the prevalent antiquities of brochs and a possible stone circle. Extensive drainage operations are noted, which may have included Toftingall Moss.
- 5.6.12. The OS Name Books for Caithness (1871-73) references *Toftingall: An extensive district in the north west part of the parish, which embraces a number of Crofts & small farm houses.*
- 5.6.13. The settlement of Mybster is recorded from the First Edition OS mapping (1877).
- 5.6.14. This area of Caithness was subject to the Highland Clearances in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the small farmsteads and crofts were cleared to enable large-scale sheep farming.
- 5.6.15. The nearest farmstead to the Site is MHG18919 Moss of Toftingall, 700m north, comprising an unroofed building attached to the wall of a field. A sheepfold located just east of the Site may be associated with the farm, or be later.

### MODERN PERIOD

- 5.6.16. Although exploited for building material throughout prehistory in the region, it is from the early 1800s that Caithness flagstone has been exploited commercially.
- 5.6.17. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the industry was buoyant, and the material was shipped all over the world from 11 major quarries in Caithness. It was during this time that the 'Spittal beds' were discovered to contain the finest grade material for strength and durability combined. The Caithness flagstone quarries in and around Spittal are historically significant, being well-known around Scotland and the source of much of the street paving in Edinburgh.
- 5.6.18. The first edition historic OS mapping (1877) shows that quarrying in the study area had commenced by this time. The main flagstone quarry of the area, Spittal Quarries MHG185, was well-established by 1877. By 1907 Spittal Quarries had expanded to cover 23ha. After WWI the flagstone industry fell into decline as concrete pavements and paving blocks became available. In 1949 Spittal Quarry was reopened and the revived industry continues on a small scale. The historic OS mapping sequence shows the 1907 area as the maximum extent in terms of area until the mid-1970s, however the most recent aerial photography shows that the quarry has expanded by at least 10ha in the intervening years.

- 5.6.19. In the modern period commercial forestry will have resulted in extensive ploughing across the Site which will have damaged any near-surface archaeological remains not avoided by rides.

## 6. STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE

### 6.1. KNOWN AND POTENTIAL HERITAGE ASSETS

#### *KNOWN HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN THE SITE BOUNDARY*

- 6.1.1. There are no known heritage assets located within the Site Boundary.

#### *ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE SITE*

- 6.1.2. In general, the Site is of negligible archaeological potential. The potential for hitherto unknown archaeological remains is further reduced by the establishment of commercial forestry across the Site and associated deep-ploughing which would have largely destroyed any remains present.
- 6.1.3. Although there is evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity, the character of the Site largely comprises moorland bog, and the evidence suggests the area of proposed infrastructure would have been largely unsuitable for settlement throughout both the prehistoric and historic periods.
- 6.1.4. There is evidence of activity primarily in the later historic period when drainage was implemented within the Site Boundary, though this relates to sheep grazing activity, and is unlikely to have resulted in the presence of significant archaeological remains.
- 6.1.5. Surveys of the Site for the current Proposed Development are likely to have identified and recorded any upstanding cultural heritage assets within the areas proposed for infrastructure. It is therefore considered that there is Negligible potential for further upstanding cultural heritage assets. Hitherto unknown archaeological remains, if present, are likely to relate to pastoral agriculture, remains that are likely to have been damaged by later/modern commercial forestry activities are therefore likely to be of Low importance.
- 6.1.6. It is acknowledged that in areas of deep peat, there is potential for previously unrecorded assets to survive below-ground and obscured by the masking effect of peat cover.

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- Historic Environment Scotland 2019b, Historic Environment Policy for Scotland
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### AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

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NAME	SORTIE	DATE	FRAME NUMBERS
Moss of Toftingall, Watten	106G/Scot/UK/0070	9 <sup>th</sup> May 1946	3061
Knockglass, Watten	106G/Scot/UK/0070	9 <sup>th</sup> May 1946	3062

## ANNEX 1: KNOWN HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

Ref	Name	Description	E	N	Status
MHG1351	Standing Stones, Well of Mybster	STANDING STONE	316789	951948	Non-designated
MHG162	Broch, Achkeepster	BROCH	316800	951580	Non-designated
MHG18906	Drove stance - E of Achkeepster, Baldevist	ENCLOSURE; DROVE STANCE	316958	951615	Non-designated
MHG18917	Farmstead - Achkeepster	FARMSTEAD	316830	951582	Non-designated
MHG18919	Moss of Toftingall	FARMSTEAD; BUILDING; BOUNDARY DYKE	318000	952900	Non-designated
MHG19792	Mybster	BUILDING	316860	952350	Non-designated
MHG19780	Mybster	FARMSTEAD	316800	952500	Non-designated
MHG25192	Baldevist	BROCH?; CORN DRYING KILN; MOUND	316800	951580	Non-designated
MHG29412	Sheepfold, Achkeepster	SHEEP FOLD; ENCLOSURE	316830	950430	Non-designated
MHG30820	Aircraft Crash Site, Westerdale	AIRCRAFT CRASH SITE	317700	950300	Non-designated
MHG32359	Well of Mybster	WELL	316708	952000	Non-designated
MHG32360	Mybster	SETTLEMENT	316868	952926	Non-designated
MHG32357	Sheepfold, Achkeepster	SHEEP FOLD	316600	950946	Non-designated
MHG32358	Well of Baldevist	WELL; FARMSTEAD?	316493	952012	Non-designated
MHG39372	Possible Standing Stone, Grey Stone, Mybster	STANDING STONE; GRAVE MARKER	316794	952694	Non-designated
MHG45518	Baldevist	BURIAL / broch?	316800	951580	Non-designated
MHG51159	Site of ruined crofthouse at Mybster Croft	CROFTHOUSE	316905	952213	Non-designated
MHG53512	Peat cuttings, Moss of Knockglass	PEAT CUTTING	317402	950279	Non-designated
MHG635	Possible Standing Stone, Grey Stone, Mybster	STANDING STONE	316794	952694	Non-designated

MHG54156	Sheep shelter, Achkeepster	SHEEP FOLD	316131	951538	Non- designated
MHG54155	Sheep fold, Achkeepster	SHEEP FOLD	316448	951571	Non- designated
90831	ACHKEEPSTER	FARMSTEAD (PERIOD UNASSIGNED)	316800	951500	Non- designated
90834	BALEDAVIST	ENCLOSURE(S) (PERIOD UNASSIGNED)	316900	951500	Non- designated