

Land East of 25 Elgol, Isle of Skye, Highland: Watching Brief Report

On Behalf of:	Mrs Mary Sim
National Grid Reference (NGR):	NG 52993 14624
AOC Project No:	24152
OASIS No:	1-302646
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This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Summary

This report presents the results of a watching brief undertaken prior to the erection of small single residential development at land east of 25 Elgol, Isle of Skye, Highland. The watching brief required the monitoring of ground-breaking works on the access track within the development area. The access track measured 50m by 3.3m.

The access track crossed an annular feature identified on aerial photographs. This feature is probably geological in nature with no sign visible either on the ground surface or cut into the subsoil. Excavation was undertaken to formation level with a maximum depth of 0.50m being reached. No archaeological features or material were observed during the works.

Given the steeply sloping ground observed in the remainder of the site and the absence of archaeologically significant material it is recommended that no further archaeological works are required on the site. This will need to be confirmed in writing by the Highland Council Historic Environment Team.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 AOC Archaeology group was commissioned by Mrs Mary Sim to undertake a Watching Brief at land east of 25 Elgol, Isle of Skye, Highland, prior to the erection of a small single residential development (NGR; NG 52993 14624) (Planning Ref. 17/00959/FUL). The work required is in response to advice by Kirsty Cameron of the Highland Council Historic Environment Team, who has recommended an Archaeological Watching Brief on all ground-breaking works associated with the development.
- 1.1.2 The programme of archaeological works was in keeping with the policies outlined in *Scottish Planning Policy* (2014) and *PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology* (2001) in order to record the extent and significance of any archaeological remains which may be present within the development area.

1.2 Location

- 1.2.1 The site consists of a triangular land parcel measuring approximately 60.0m by 120.0m (NGR; NG 52993 14624) and situated approximately 25m to the east of 25 Elgol, Isle of Skye, Highland. The land parcel is bounded to the north by the B8083 and by field boundaries to the south and east. The site consists of relatively level ground sloping steeply along the southern boundary (Figure 1).

1.3 Archaeological Background

- 1.3.1 Consultation of the archives at Historic Environment Scotland revealed that there are no known sites of archaeological significance located within the environs of the development. However, an annular feature was identified (Figure 2) through aerial photography at the north of the site. A number of sites are also known in the immediate vicinity.
- 1.3.2 The remains of an undated farmstead (NG51SW 50) lie 40.0m to the east of the site. These remains consist of at least three rectangular stone buildings, reduced to rubble and set on negative cut platforms.
- 1.3.3 To the north of the site lie several refurbished stone cottages (NG51SW 48) of probable post medieval date. These are currently used as holiday homes.
- 1.3.4 An early medieval cross incised stone (NG51SW 3) dating to the 7th – 8th century is present to the south-west of the site set upright by the B8083.
- 1.3.5 A possible standing stone (NG51SW 17) is situated to the south-east at Allt Na Cille. Other sites of heritage interest include two enclosures depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Inverness-shire, Isle of Skye 1881, sheet L) (NG51SW 11) and a stone setting (NG51SW 16) of possible Neolithic/Bronze age date.
- 1.3.6 The development area itself does not contain any known sites at present. However, with the exception of the north of the site, the area has lain relatively undisturbed in recent years. Therefore, there exists the possibility that hitherto unknown archaeological remains may be present.

2 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological works are:
- i) To safeguard the archaeological resource that may be disturbed by the proposed residential development. Provision of an experienced field archaeologist to undertake a watching brief during all ground-breaking works associated with the construction of the access track;
 - ii) To liaise with Kirsty Cameron (HCHET) and the client in the event of significant archaeological features and/or small finds being unearthed as to the most appropriate response in safeguarding these features either by preservation *in situ*, if at all feasible, or by archaeological recording;

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Archaeological Works

- 3.1.1 The watching brief involved the monitoring of all ground-breaking works associated with the creation of an access track by an experienced field archaeologist. The ground-breaking works were carried out by a tracked excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket.

4 RESULTS

- 4.1 The watching brief was conducted on the 29th of November 2017. The weather conditions were unfavourable with snow and hail; however, this did not hinder archaeological visibility. The excavated area was located about 5m south of the B8083, with the area sloping slightly towards the road (Plate 1).



Plate 1: General view of excavation area from south

- 4.2 An access track measuring approximately 50m by 3.3m and aligned east-west, was stripped of topsoil to formation level. This ranged between 0.10m and 0.50m in depth. The Topsoil consisted of a heavy, poorly drained, sterile clay loam which ranged from 0.10m to 0.50m in depth. Excavation revealed an underlying subsoil of grey boulder clay with outcroppings of bed-rock. No archaeologically significant features or material was observed.
- 4.3 the access track cut through the middle of the annular feature shown on Historic Environment Scotland (HES) photographs (Figure 2, Plate 2). Excavation was to formation level and only revealed subsoil/bedrock along the tracks southern edge (Plates 4 & 5). No deeper excavations were to be undertaken and the exposed deposits were to be covered with Type 2. The topsoil within the area of the anomaly was relatively sterile and had been disturbed by modern dumping and disturbance. The client and landowner Mr Andrew Sim stated that the area to the north of the anomaly had been where a shed had been buried in April/May 1999 (Plate 3). It is probable given the lack of visible evidence either on the ground surface or cut into the subsoil that the feature is geological in nature



Plate 2: The circular anomaly on aerial photograph



Plate 3: General view of excavated area from east showing slope



Plate 4: Photograph of the buried shed area April/May 1999 (Andrew Sim)



Plate 5: View of the exposed subsoil in the area of the anomaly



Plate 6: South facing section within the area of the anomaly at formation level



Plate 7: South facing section showing formation level

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The watching brief revealed that the annular anomaly was most probably geological in nature with no evidence visible on the ground surface or cut into the subsoil. No archaeologically significant features or material were observed during the remainder of the works.
- 5.2 Given the steeply sloping ground, the presence of modern disturbance and the absence of archaeologically significant material observed during the creation of the access track, it is recommended that no further archaeological works are required within the development area. This will need to be confirmed in writing by the Highland Council Historic Environment Team.

6 REFERENCES

Scottish Government 2014 *Scottish Planning Policy 2014*

Scottish Government 2011 *Planning And Archaeology 2/2011*

Land East of 25 Elgol, Isle of Skye, Highland: Watching Brief Data Structure Report

Section 2: Appendices

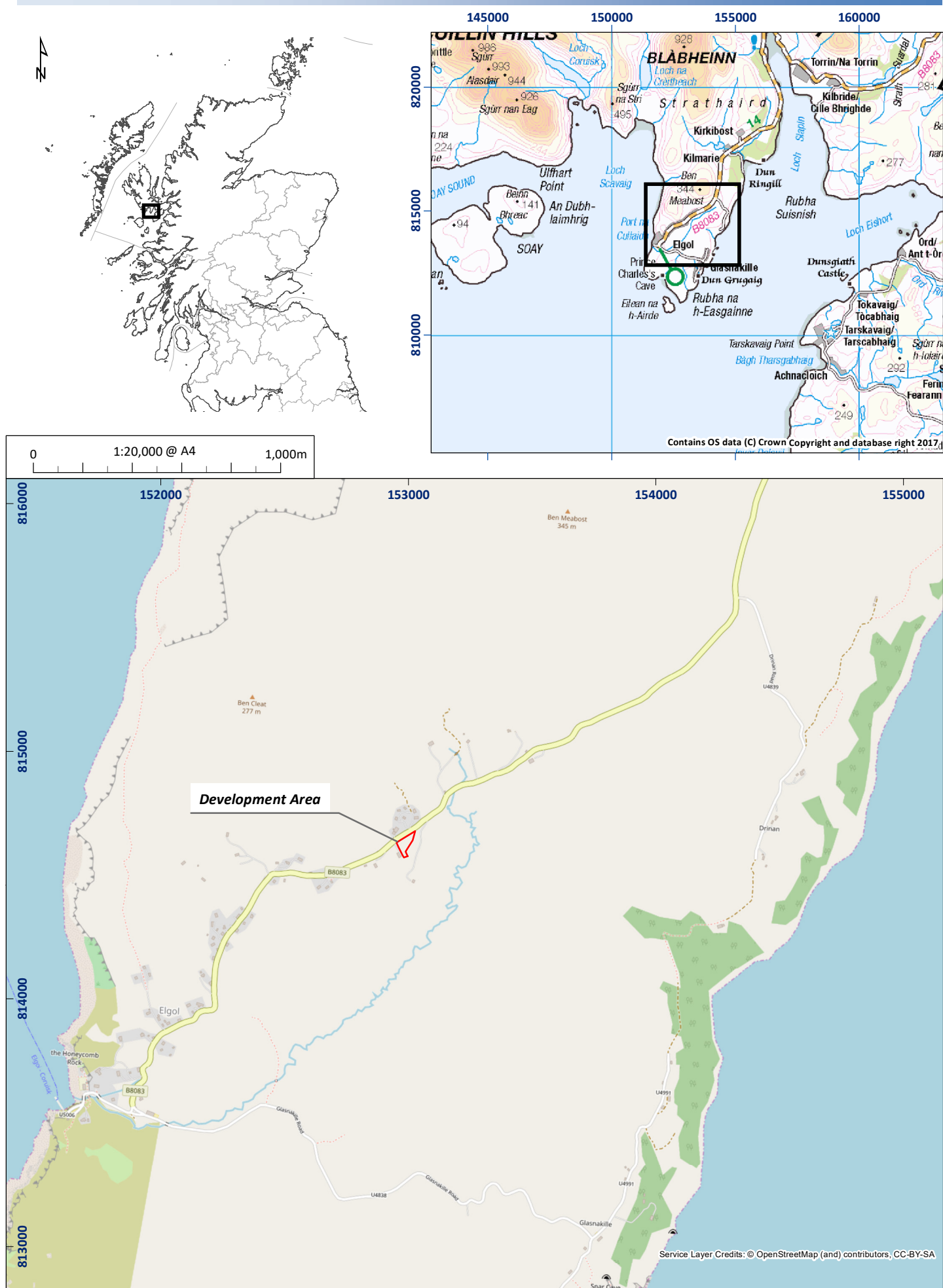


Figure 1: Site location plan

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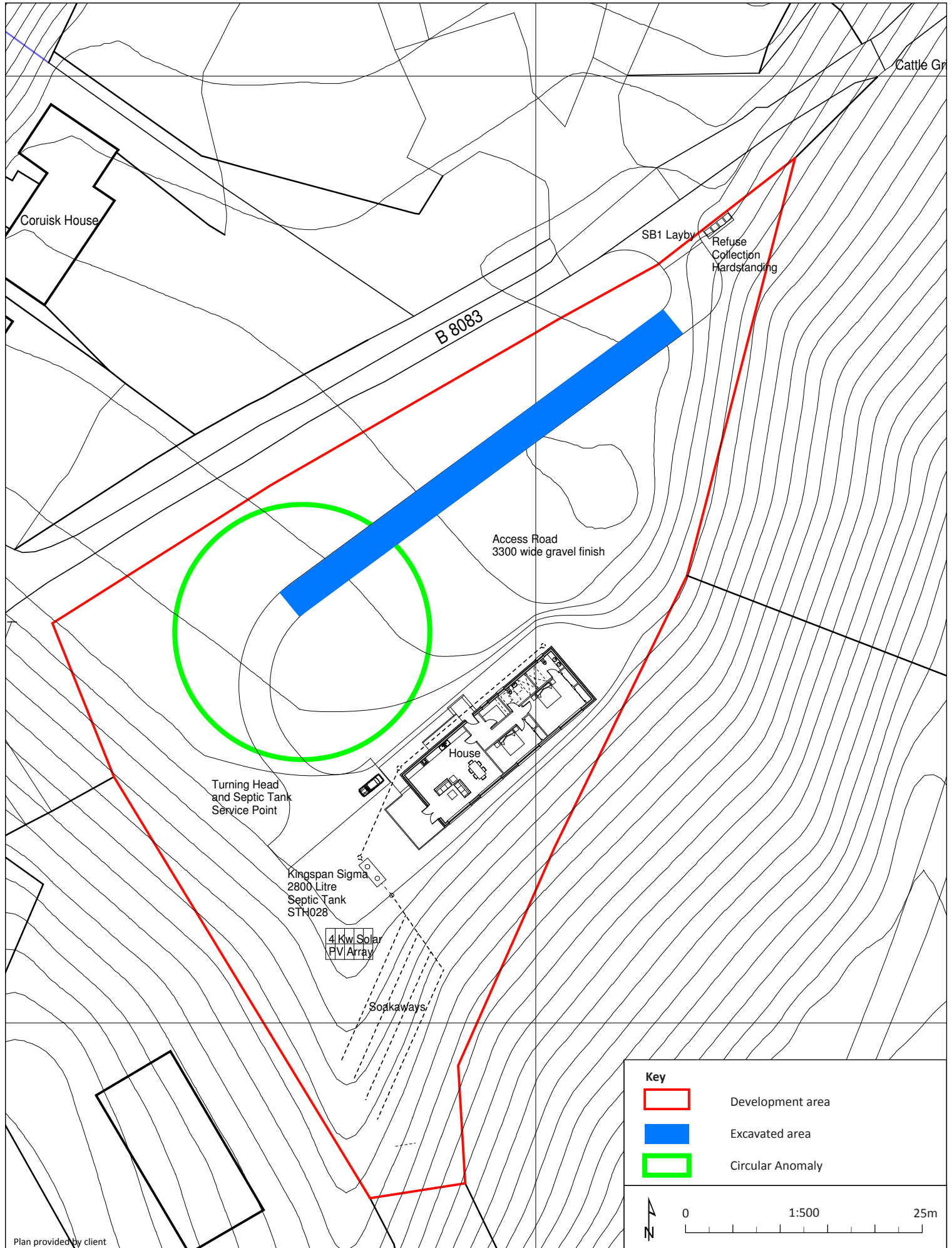


Figure 2: Plan showing excavated area

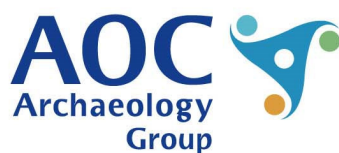
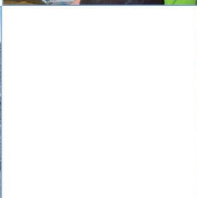
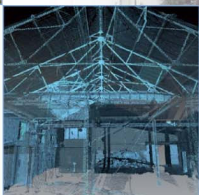
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APPENDIX 1: Digital Photographic Register

Photo No.	Description	Taken From
001	Pre-ex - General view of excavation area	S
002	Pre-ex – General view of excavation area	SE
003	Pre-ex – General view of excavation area	SW
004	Pre-ex – General view of excavation area	S
005	Post-ex view of excavated area	E
006	South facing section within the area of the anomaly at formation level	S
007	Post-ex view of excavated area	W
008	South facing section showing formation level	S
009	Detailed view of disturbed area	SE
010	Post-ex view of excavated area	E

APPENDIX 2: 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland' Report

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Highland Council Historic Environment Team
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME	Land East of 25 Elgol, Isle of Skye, Highland
PROJECT CODE:	AOC 24152
PARISH:	Elgol
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Anne-Aymonne Marot
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	AOC Archaeology Group
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S)	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	N/A
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NG 52993 14624
START DATE (this season)	29 th November 2017
END DATE (this season)	29 th November 2017
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>This report presents the results of a watching brief undertaken prior to the erection of small single residential development at land east of 25 Elgol, Isle of Skye, Highland. The watching brief required the monitoring of ground-breaking works on the access track within the development area. The access track measured 50m by 3.3m.</p> <p>The access track crossed an annular feature identified on aerial photographs. This feature is probably geological in nature with no sign visible either on the ground surface or cut into the subsoil. Excavation was undertaken to formation level with a maximum depth of 0.50m being reached. No archaeological features or material were observed during the works.</p> <p>Given the steeply sloping ground observed in the remainder of the site and the absence of archaeologically significant material it is recommended that no further archaeological works are required on the site. This will need to be confirmed in writing by the Highland Council Historic Environment Team.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
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