

West Coast Archaeological Services

Erection of 18 Houses at Land 40m West of The Birches, Kyleakin, Isle of Skye

Desk-based Assessment and Archaeological Evaluation Data Structure Report

On Behalf of:	James MacQueen Contractors
Highland Council Planning Ref.	17/04694/FUL
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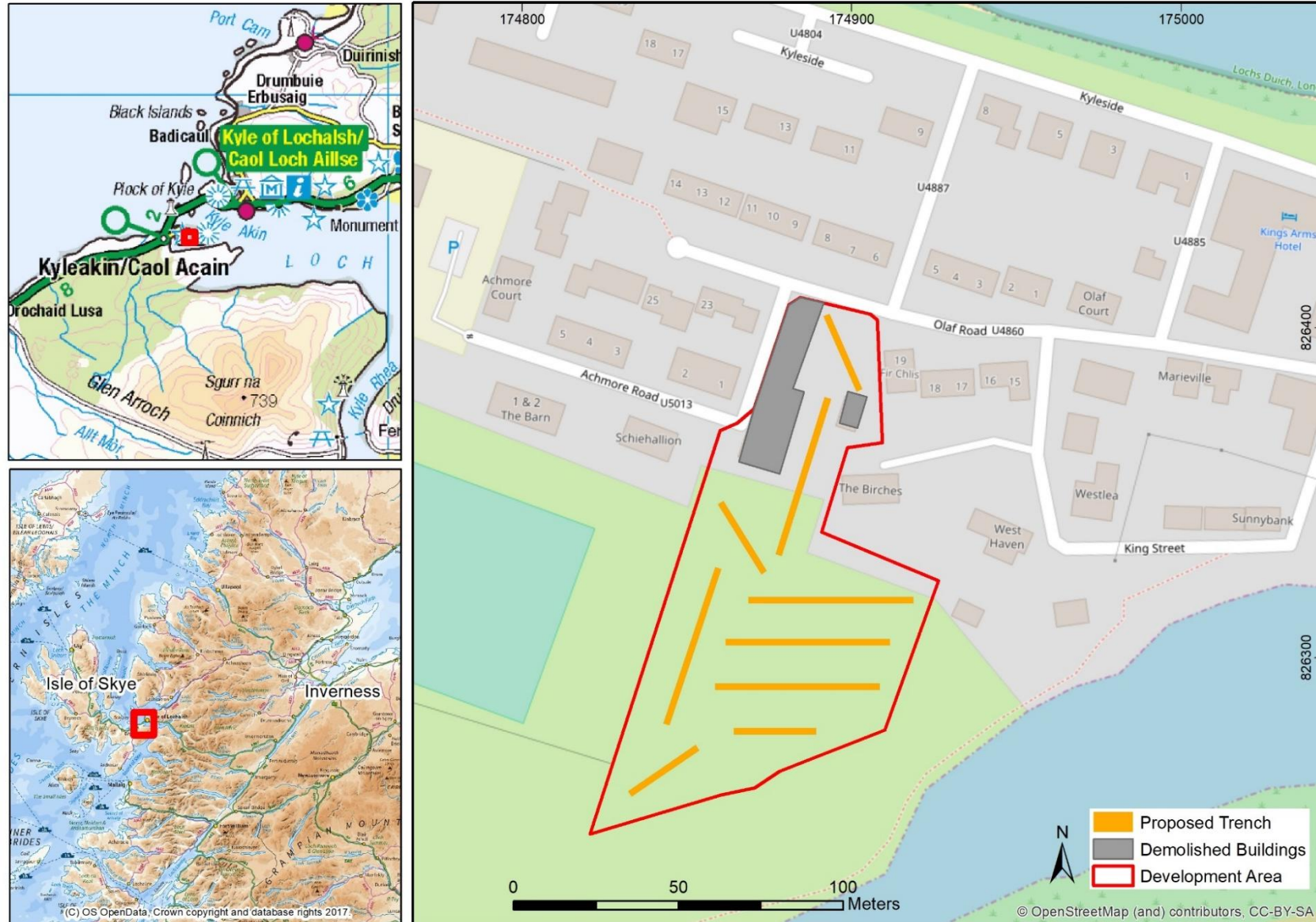
1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation were required by James MacQueen Building Contractors in advance of the construction of 18 houses, formation of access and associated infrastructure on land 40m west of The Birches, Kyleakin, Isle of Skye (Planning Reference 17/04694/FUL).
- 1.2 The programme of archaeological works was specified by the Highland Council Historic Environment Team (HET) in keeping with the policies outlined in *Scottish Planning Policy* (2014) and *PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology* (2011). The desk-based assessment was requested in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area prior to fieldwork commencing. An archaeological trial trenching evaluation of 7% of the development area was requested in order to record the presence and extent of any archaeological features which may be present within the development area.
- 1.3 The archaeological evaluation was carried out over two days between 23rd and 24th of July 2018. Ten trenches of various lengths were stripped of topsoil with an area totaling 700m², covering approximately 7% of the evaluation area. No archaeological finds or features were recorded.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The development is located in the village of Kyleakin, a former ferry village on the southeast end of the Isle of Skye, overlooking the straits of Kyle Akin and across from the mainland town of Kyle of Lochalsh (**Figure 1**). Kyleakin is the first settlement encountered on the A87 on the Isle of Skye side of the Skye Bridge, and located 300m east of the roundabout. It straddles a small tidal inlet, An t-Ob. Broadford is located 7 miles along the A87 to the southwest. The proposed development comprises 18 dwelling houses, an access road and associated drainage. The site is accessed via a track which runs along the eastern edge of Kyleakin Community Centre. The development site comprises pastoral fields with houses to the north and a football pitch to the west. Several buildings at the northern edge of the site comprising sheds of breeze block, brick or timber construction with corrugated iron roofs are related to a modern dairy farm and are in the process of being demolished.
- 2.2 A desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation were required as the site is located within an area of archaeological potential. There is evidence for significant prehistoric and medieval remains in the vicinity, as well as the later post-medieval settlement that is prevalent in the landscape today. A prominent crossing point to the mainland, the Kyleakin - Kyle of Lochalsh ferry crossing was officially established in the early-19th century and operated until the opening of the Skye bridge in 1995.

Desk-based Assessment and Archaeological Evaluation, Housing Development, Kyleakin, Isle of Skye:
Data Structure Report



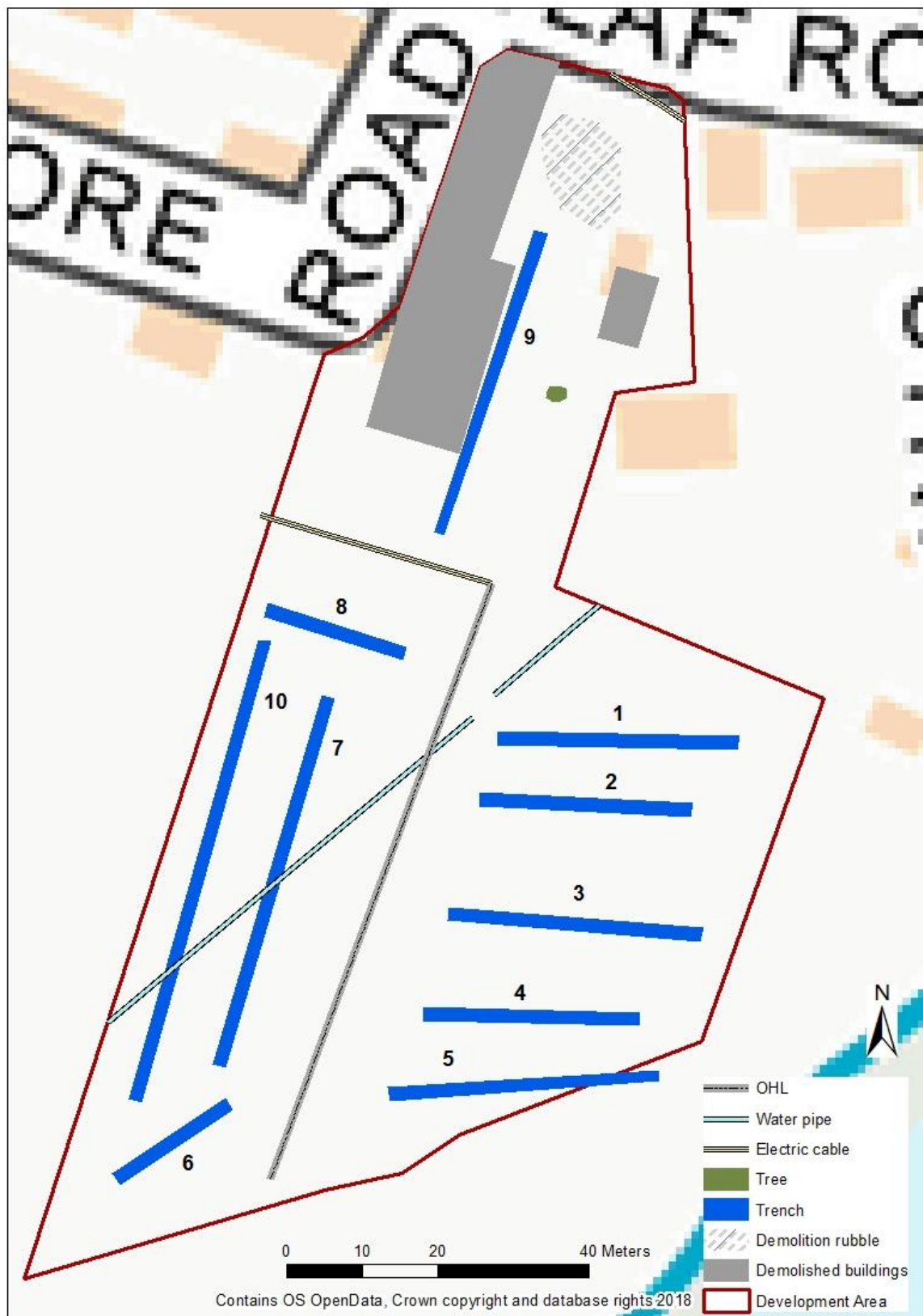


Figure 2: Evaluation trench locations



Plate 1: The eastern extent of the development site, facing east

3 OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 The *Chartered Institute for Archaeologists* (CIfA) defines an archaeological evaluation as ‘a limited programme of non-intrusive and/or intrusive fieldwork which determines the presence or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site on land...field evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context as appropriate (2014 (a)).’ The aims of the archaeological works are:
- i) to monitor ground-breaking works during the trial trenching evaluation
 - ii) to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains and make mitigation recommendations prior to development
 - iii) to remove by hand any overburden in order to expose the archaeological deposits
 - iv) to excavate, sample and record any features or to propose arrangements for their safeguarding, where possible
 - v) to sample deposits for post-excavation work, including environmental analysis and dating
 - vi) to liaise with the client in the event of significant archaeological features and /or small finds being unearthed as to the most appropriate response for safeguarding these features either by preservation *in situ*, if at all feasible, or by archaeological recording
 - vii) to make recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development

- viii) to make recommendations for post-excavation work
- ix) to report on the results of the trial trenching evaluation

4 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

4.1 A comprehensive desk-based assessment was conducted in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation. A full check of all available historical and archaeological records, aerial photographs and historical maps was conducted using the Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER) Sites and Monuments Record, the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), Ordnance Survey Name Books, Historic Environment Scotland's databases, the National Library of Scotland, statistical accounts and other available records, literary sources or online resources about the site. This work was conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (CIfA 2014(b)).

4.2 Historical Mapping

4.2.1 Historic maps were consulted online at the National Library of Scotland (NLS). The earliest map to show Kyleakin is Blaeu's map of 1654 depicting a tower with the label *Castle of Dun akin* and *Cheules Akin* in the sea- Straits of Haakon. The first map to show Kyleakin as a place name is the Robert Gordon Map of Scotland, 1636-1652; Kyleakin is shown as *Cheulis Akyn*. The 1776 Murdoch Mackenzie map shows *Keilaken* and depicts a tower. *Castlenafuchag* is also labelled on this map, as with other marine maps i.e. Huddart *et al*, 1794, and Depot Generale de la Marine, 1803. *Castlenafuchag* is referenced generally in seafaring books and seaman's guides and as a nautical hazard comprising a rocky ledge which runs half-way over to the islands. The first map to show the village of Kyleakin and the development site in detail is the Ordnance Survey 6-inch to the mile map where the development site is shown as planned rectilinear village plots.

(a) Robert Gordon, 1636-1652

A map of Scotland, north of Loch Linnhe and the River Dee and west of the River Deveron

Kyleakin as a place name is first depicted as *Cheulis Akyn*.

(b) Blaeu Map, 1654

Skia vel Skiana, [vulgo], The Yle of Skie / Auct. Timotheo Pont.

Shows label *Castle of Dun akin* and an illustration of a tower, and *Cheules Akin* in the sea – Straits of Haakon.

(c) 1776 Murdoch Mackenzie Map

The south part of Sky Island and the adjacent main of Scotland.

Shows *Keilaken* and depicts a tower. *Castlenafuchag* is also shown.

(d) 1794 Joseph Huddart, Robert Laurie and James Whittle

A new chart of the West coast of Scotland from the point of Ardnamurchan to Cape Wrath.

Shows *Castlenafuchag*.

(e) 1832 John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland

Skye Island, &c.

Shows Kyleakin as a settlement of six houses, three either side of the road, and *Castle Muel* situated to the east. The ferry crossing is also marked.

(f) Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6-inch-to-the-mile map

Inverness-shire (Isle of Skye), Sheet XLI (includes Lochalsh; Strath)

Survey Date: 1876 Publication Date: 1882

The development site is shown as planned rectilinear village allotments.

(g) Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 6-inch-to-the-mile map

Inverness-shire (Isle of Skye) Sheet XLI (includes Lochalsh; Strath)

Publication Date: 1901 Date Revised: 1901

There are no changes from the 1st edition map, the development area is still shown as planned rectilinear village allotments.

(h) Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 6-inch-to-the-mile map

Inverness-shire (Isle of Skye) Sheet XLI (includes Lochalsh; Strath)

Publication Date: 1901 Date Revised: 1901

There are no changes from the 1st edition map, the development area is still shown as planned rectilinear village allotments.

(i) Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 6-inch-to-the-mile map

Inverness-shire (Isle of Skye) Sheet XLI (includes Lochalsh; Strath)

Publication Date: 1901 Date Revised: 1901

There are no changes from the 1st edition map, the development area is still shown as planned rectilinear village allotments.



Figure 3: Extract from Blaeu Map, 1654



Figure 4: Extract from John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland, 1832

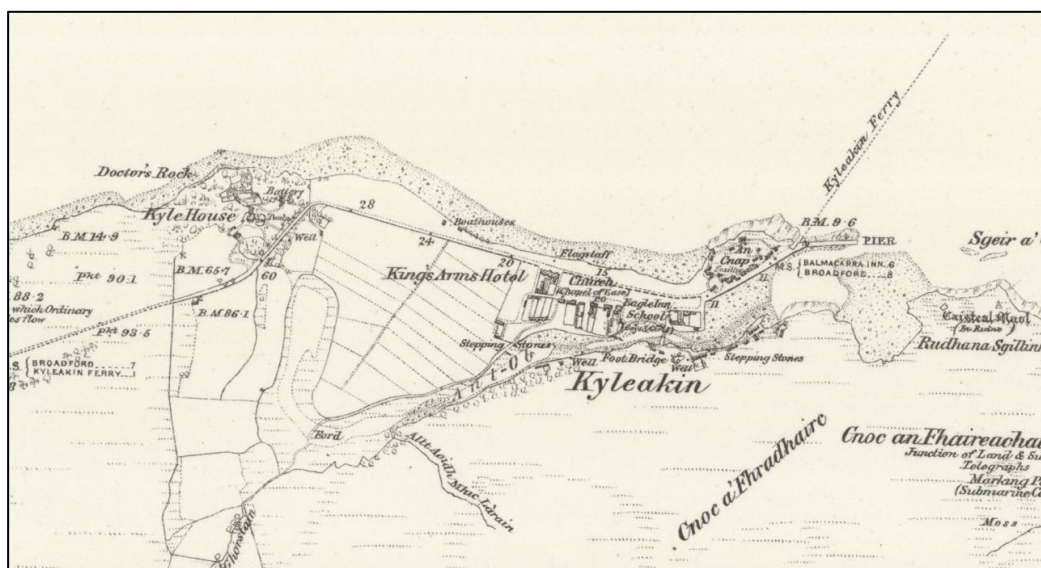


Figure 5: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6-inch-to-the-mile map, 1882

4.4 Historic Environment Record

- 4.4.1 There are no known sites within the immediate development area, however, several previously known sites in the village are listed in the Highland Council Historic Environment Record (HHER). A number of shipwrecks are recorded in Kyleakin. Records associated with the harbour include; Kyleakin harbour (MHG35127) and slipway (MHG5417); a boat shed (MHG28650) and boathouses (MHG33836; MHG33835). Notable buildings in the village include; The King's Arms Hotel (MHG25383) and Kyle House (Listed (B) 13995; MHG16948), built in the early 19th century and gardens (MHG36285). Archaeological assessments carried out to the west of Kyle House prior to the construction of the Skye Road Bridge identified two undated structures with a cobbled area (MHG6755) and boundary banks (MHG6625; MHG6756); one dated to the 20th century. A barrage balloon site (MHG6757) relating to World War I defences is also situated near Kyle House.
- 4.4.2 Prehistoric and medieval sites in Kyleakin include a cairn with associated finds, and Caisteal Maol, which is located on a prominent site with the potential for earlier activity.

MHG5416 NG 7580 2634 Caisteal Maol, Kyleakin

A stronghold of the MacKinnons of Skye occupies a rocky promontory about 50ft OD. The structure appears to be of 15th century date and is rectangular on plan measuring 46ft 6 ins by 34ft 8 ins externally with its major axis lying almost NE-SW. Only the N and S corners and the SE wall remain, being 8-9ft thick. The walls are of basalt rubble and are faced externally and internally with squared rubble built to courses of varying heights.

MHG5437 NG 7460 2650 Cairn with finds, Kyleside

Several stone coffins (probably cists) with urns, were found in a large cairn which was destroyed when making the road between Dr MacKinnon's house and Kyleakin village; at a point where this road takes a sharp turn.

- 4.4.3 Known finds in the area include a bronze cauldron and a coin hoard:

MHG5418 NG 7500 2600 Cauldron and Bog Butter, Strath

In 1884 a bronze cauldron was found in close juxtaposition with kegs of butter in a peat moss at a depth of 7 ½ feet near Kyleakin. It measured 18 inches in diameter and was much patched: the rim and handles missing. Classified as a cauldron of 'Battersea' type of the early 1st century AD and in view of its association with the kegs of bog-butter suggested as a likely votive deposit.

MHG5419

NG 7579 2634

Coin Hoard, Caisteal Maol

A hoard of 70 coins discovered in April 1951 in a chink of the masonry on the exterior of the western side of Castle Maol. The hoard is mainly comprised of coins of James VI ranging in date from 1572 to 1601, but also included are 2 Scottish and 1 English coins of Mary, a coin of James V and an English sixpence of Elizabeth.

4.5 Other Sources

- 4.5.1 The name Kyleakin is derived from the Gaelic for 'Kyle of Haakon' - the straits of Hakon. Haakon Haakonsson was king of Norway in the mid 13th century and met Alexander III of Scotland's forces at the Battle of Largs in the Forth of Clyde. His fleet moored somewhere near Kyleakin en route to the battle, hence the name.
- 4.5.2 Kyleakin has a medieval, if not earlier, provenance. Caisteal Mor, a 15th century stronghold of the Mackinnons, is situated at the eastern extent of the settlement. Local folklore alleges that the castle overlies an earlier structure that was home to a Norwegian princess in the 13th century. The majority of the village seen today was planned in the early 19th century, and the ferry was established in the mid-19th century.
- 4.5.3 Information on the place names from the 1st edition OS map can be found in the Ordnance Survey Name Books (Inverness-shire (Skye) Vol. 10). Most of the entries give purely descriptive accounts of their location and physical characteristics.

Kyleakin: This name applies to a small village situated at the north-eastern extremity of the Isle of Skye, the dwellings are partly one and partly two stories high, slated and in good repair.

Pier (Kyleakin): This name is applied to a small pier situated a little north-east of the village of Kyle-Akin. It was built by the county. This pier is chiefly used for the boat conveying mail bags, passengers and other traffic southwards and vice versa.

Caisteal Maol (in ruins): This name applies to the ruin of some ancient stronghold. The walls are about twenty feet high and about four feet thick. It is situated on a small knoll on a bare headland about one fourth mile to the east of the village of Kyle Akin. Its signification is the bare or "bald castle" supposed to be flat roofed when in repair. Its original name was Dun Akin

- 4.5.4 The development site lies in the historic parish of Strath, details of which can be found in the Old Statistical Account (County of Inverness, OSA, Vol. XVI, 1795) and the New Statistical Account (County of inverness, NSA, Vol. XIV, 1845). The parish of Strath also contains the village of Broadford and the islands of Scalpay, Pabba and Longa. The parish is also known as 'Strathswordle'. While 'Strath' is Gaelic and signifies a valley, 'Swordle' could be of Danish origin or may signify a place situated

in the centre of the parish. The parish is known to have been in existence since 1354 and has been the family property of the Mackinnons; a family with a turbulent history dating to back to that period, and more recently, in 1715 and 1745 as supporters of the Jacobite cause. A number of caves are present in the parish, one is reported to have been used as refuge by Prince Charles Edward Stuart. These accounts are detailed in terms of describing the parish economy and inhabitants, but does not detail the development area, other than to describe 'Keil' as the location of the only ferry on the 'post-road' from Inverness.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

5.1 Methodology

- 5.1.1 Prior to the commencement of the ground works, a rapid walkover of the development site was carried out in order to identify any potential upstanding archaeology that would be impacted upon. During the evaluation, several buildings in the northern area of the site comprising sheds of breeze block, brick or timber construction with corrugated iron roofs were in the process of being demolished.
- 5.1.2 Fieldwork was carried out as per the methodology set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Williamson 2018). Buffer zones were put in place around a number of services across the site including overhead powerlines, buried high voltage electrical cables and live and redundant water mains. This resulted in the relocation of proposed trenches to ensure good coverage and the 7% evaluation was reached without impacting on the services (**Figure 1; Figure 2**).
- 5.1.3 Evaluation trenches were monitored by an archaeologist by way of a controlled topsoil strip. The archaeologist directed digging by a mechanical excavator fitted with a **straight-edged** bucket in order to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the development area. All work was carried out in accordance with the Highland Council *Standards for Archaeological Work* (2012) and the CIfA *Code of Conduct* (2014(c)).
- 5.1.4 A written and photographic record of the fieldwork was produced.

5.2 Results

- 5.2.1 Fieldwork was carried out over two days between 23rd and 24th July 2018 in dry and bright conditions with good visibility. Ten trenches were excavated across the site with an area totalling 700m² (**Plates 3-10, Appendix 1**). The area available to evaluate was constrained by the presence of numerous services across the development site, including; overhead powerlines, buried high voltage electric cables, live and redundant water mains and a mature tree (Figure 2). Full details of the trench records can be consulted in appendix 1. No archaeological finds or features were recorded during the evaluation.



Plate 2: Demolition work and building foundations, facing north

- 5.2.2 Due to demolition works in progress, a large pile of rubble was present at the northern edge of the site (Plate 2). A buffer zone for a buried electric cable, a buffer to protect a mature tree and the presence of various buildings foundations reduced the area to evaluate in this part of the site further. With evidence of disturbed ground uncovered in the northern extent of Trench 9, the proposed trench in the northernmost area was relocated to the western area of the site (Trench 10) and extended to reach the target 7% coverage.
- 5.2.3 A redundant asbestos water main (0.1m diameter) was uncovered in trenches 7 and 10. Another pipe of similar diameter, and on the same alignment was uncovered 2m to the south. This pipe was very corroded and does not feature on service plans, but probably also relates to water supply. The base of a linear cut was also exposed on the same alignment and within 2m of the pipes, and probably also relates to water supply.
- 5.2.4 The topsoil depth varied between 0.2m and 0.4m, with the deeper area on the downslope at the eastern extent of the development site. Natural subsoil was mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles up to 0.06m in length.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Although the development site is located in an area with the potential for archaeological remains, the evaluation did not uncover any finds or features of archaeological significance. The northern extent of the development site is likely to be heavily disturbed by buildings foundations and associated services. Good coverage was achieved across the remainder of the site, encountering further services; therefore, the evaluation has demonstrated the presence of significant archaeological remains on the site to be unlikely. No further work is recommended.



Plate 3: Trench 1, facing east



Plate 4: Trench 2, facing north



Plate 5: Trench 4, facing east-southeast



Plate 6: Trench 5, facing east



Plate 7: Trench 6, facing southwest



Plate 8: Trench 7, facing north-northeast



Plate 9: Trench 9, facing north-northeast



Plate 10: Trench 10, facing north-northeast

7 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1: Trench Register

Trench No.	Length (m)	Area (m ²)	Depths (m)	Archaeology	Notes
1	32	64	0.2m (W), 0.2m (mid), 0.3m (E)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m; areas of manganese panning
2	28	56	0.2m (W), 0.35m (mid), 0.35m (E)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m
3	34	68	0.2m (W), 0.3m (mid), 0.35m (E)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m
4	28	56	0.2m (WNW), 0.3m (mid), 0.5m (ESE)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m; areas of manganese panning
5	36	72	0.2m (W), 0.25m (mid), 0.4m (E)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m becoming pale greyish-orange gravel to east (downslope)
6	18	36	0.32m (NE), 0.25m (SW)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m
7	51	102	0.3m (NNE), 0.4m (mid), 0.3m (SSW)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m; redundant asbestos water main at 18m oriented ENE-WSW; corroded pipe at 20.5m oriented ENE-WSW, and a very shallow linear cut (0.03m deep) at 23m oriented ENE-WSW
8	19	38	0.3m (WNW), 0.35m (mid), 0.2m (ESE)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m
9	42	84	0.3m (SSW), 0.4m (mid), 0.5m (NNE)	None	Mid orange gravel with bands of sub-rounded pebbles <0.06m; areas of manganese panning; becomes disturbed from 29m onwards with old services and rubble
10	62	124	0.35m (SSW), 0.2m (mid), 0.35m (NNE)	None	Mid orange gravel; continuation of ENE-WSW water pipes uncovered in trench 7

APPENDIX 2: Photographic Register

Photo No.	Description	Direction Facing	Date Taken
1	Development site pre-excavation	S	23/07/18
2	Development site pre-excavation	NNE	23/07/18
3	Development site pre-excavation	NE	23/07/18
4	Development site pre-excavation	E	23/07/18
5	Development site pre-excavation	ESE	23/07/18
6	Development site pre-excavation	SE	23/07/18
7	Development site pre-excavation	E	23/07/18
8	Eastern extent of development area	NE	23/07/18
9	Western extent of development area	NNE	23/07/18
10	Site compound area and access	W	23/07/18
11	Trench 5	E	23/07/18
12	Trench 5	W	23/07/18
13	Trench 4	WNW	23/07/18
14	Trench 4	ESE	23/07/18
15	Trench 3	E	23/07/18
16	Trench 3	W	23/07/18
17	Trench 2	W	23/07/18
18	Trench 2	E	23/07/18
19	Trench 9	NNE	23/07/18
20	Trench 1	E	23/07/18
21	Trench 1	W	23/07/18
22	Trench 9	SSW	23/07/18
23	Trench 8	WNW	23/07/18
24	Trench 8	ESE	23/07/18
25	Trench 7	SSW	23/07/18
26	Trench 7	NNE	23/07/18
27	Trench 6	SW	23/07/18
28	Trench 6	NE	23/07/18
29	N area of site with demolition works and large rubble pile	NE	23/07/18
30	N area showing disturbed ground	NW	23/07/18
31	NE corner of site with rubble pile and buried services	NE	23/07/18
32	Demolition works	NE	23/07/18
33	Trench 7- redundant asbestos water pipe exposed	N	23/07/18
34	Trench 7- corroded pipe	N	23/07/18
35	Trench 10	NNE	23/07/18
36	Trench 10	SSW	23/07/18
37	Panorama of eastern area of site pre-excavation	E	23/07/18