



*Highland Archaeology Services Ltd*

Bringing the Past and Future Together

## Balcharn Enclosure Archaeological Evaluation



### Data Structure Report and Recommendations

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## Balcharn Enclosure Archaeological Evaluation

<b>HAS Report No.</b>	LLB20-005
<b>Site Code</b>	LLB20
<b>Client</b>	SSEN
<b>Planning Reference</b>	-
<b>OS Grid Reference</b>	NC 59886 06663
<b>Date</b>	30th June 2022
<b>Author(s)</b>	James McGovern
<b>Approved by</b>	Lynne McKeggie

### Summary

*A programme of archaeological evaluation by hand excavation was commissioned by Wood Group on behalf of their client SSEN in advance of the development of an agricultural shed in connection with the Lairg to Loch Buidhe OHL replacement.*

*The fieldwork comprised of the excavation of four hand-dug trenches, strategically placed around the circumference of a grass covered rubble bank enclosure. The work was carried out over two days.*

*No significant archaeological features or material was uncovered during the evaluation works. Depths of each trench across sections of the grass covered bank enclosure were recorded from the topsoil down to natural. Recordings were taken digitally with photographs and measurements.*

*On speaking to the landowner, the area had previously been occupied by a large shed which had burnt down. The grass covered rubble bank enclosure may have been constructed to house and protect this shed from the elements.*

*As this grass covered rubble bank appears to be associated with the modern shed that was previously located in this area, it is recommended that no further archaeological works are required*

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## *Legislation and Policy*

The common principles underlying international conventions, national legislation and local authority planning policies are that cultural heritage assets should be identified in advance of development and safeguarded where practicable; if disturbance is unavoidable appropriate recording of features and recovery of portable artefacts should take place. These have been set out in international agreements, UK and Scottish legislation, as well as national and local planning policies<sup>1</sup>.

Professional standards maintained throughout the present project adhered to the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists<sup>2</sup>.

## *Acknowledgements*

This document was written by James McGovern and edited by Lynne McKeggie. The project was commissioned and funded by Wood Group on behalf of their client SSEN. Fieldwork was directed by Lachlan McKeggie with the assistance of James McGovern. Background mapping has been reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey under Licence 100043217. Historic mapping is courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

## *Glossary*

- BGS - British Geological Survey
- DBA – Desk based Assessment
- DES – Discovery and Excavation Scotland
- CIfA – Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
- HES – Historic Environment Scotland
- HET – Historic Environment Team
- HHER – Highland Historic Environment Record
- NCAP - National Collection of Aerial Photographs
- NLS – National Library of Scotland

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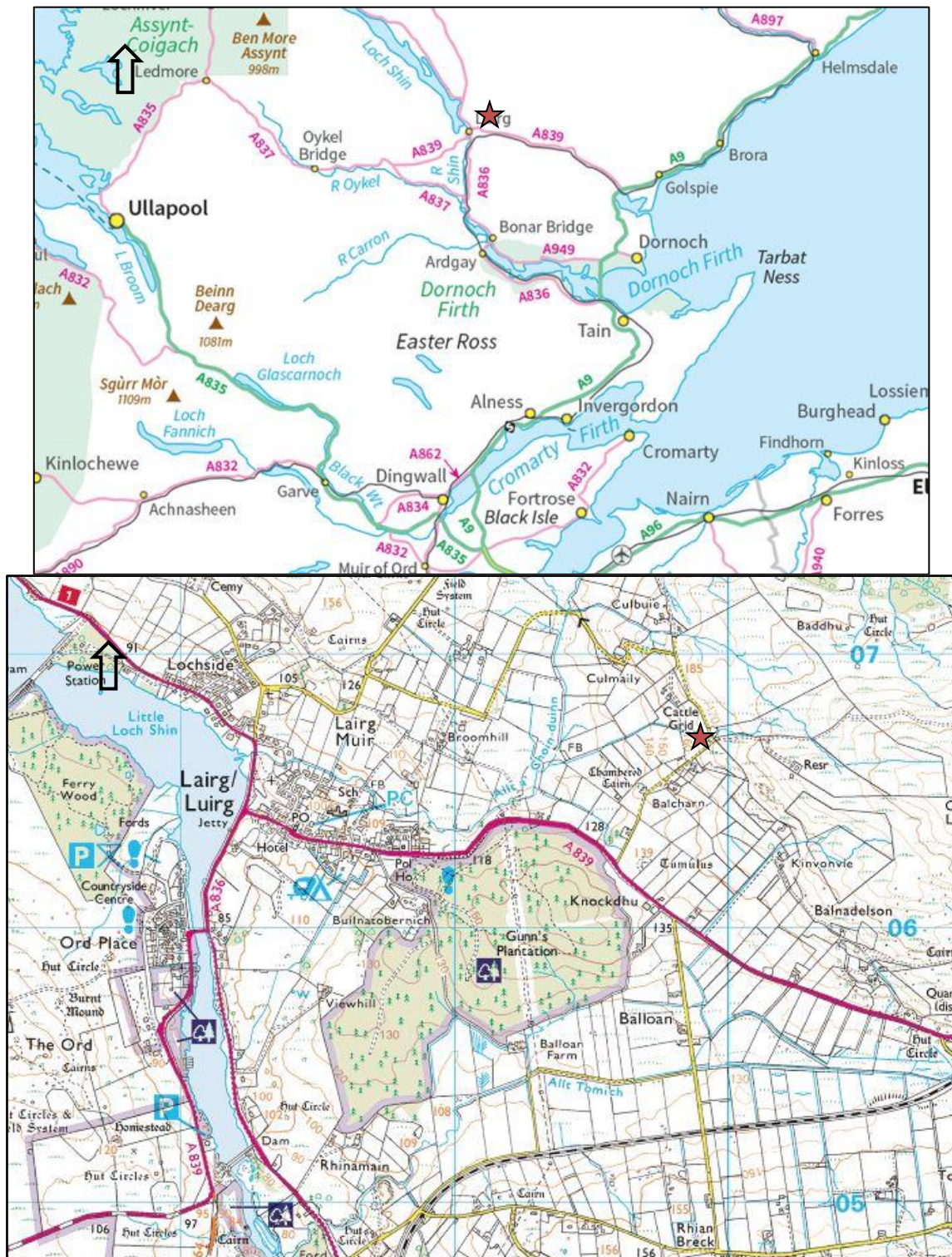
<sup>1</sup> A summary of relevant international, EU, UK and Scottish legislation and policies is available from the HAS office on request.

<sup>2</sup> Chartered Institute for Archaeology (CIfA) Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Excavation.



## Location

The site is located 1.5km East of Lairg near Balcharn farm. The development is centred around NGR NC 59886 06663 in what is currently an open field.



**Figure 1: Site location**

From OS mapping, reproduced under Licence. Not to original scale



Figure 2: Satellite image of possible enclosure (from Bing aerial)

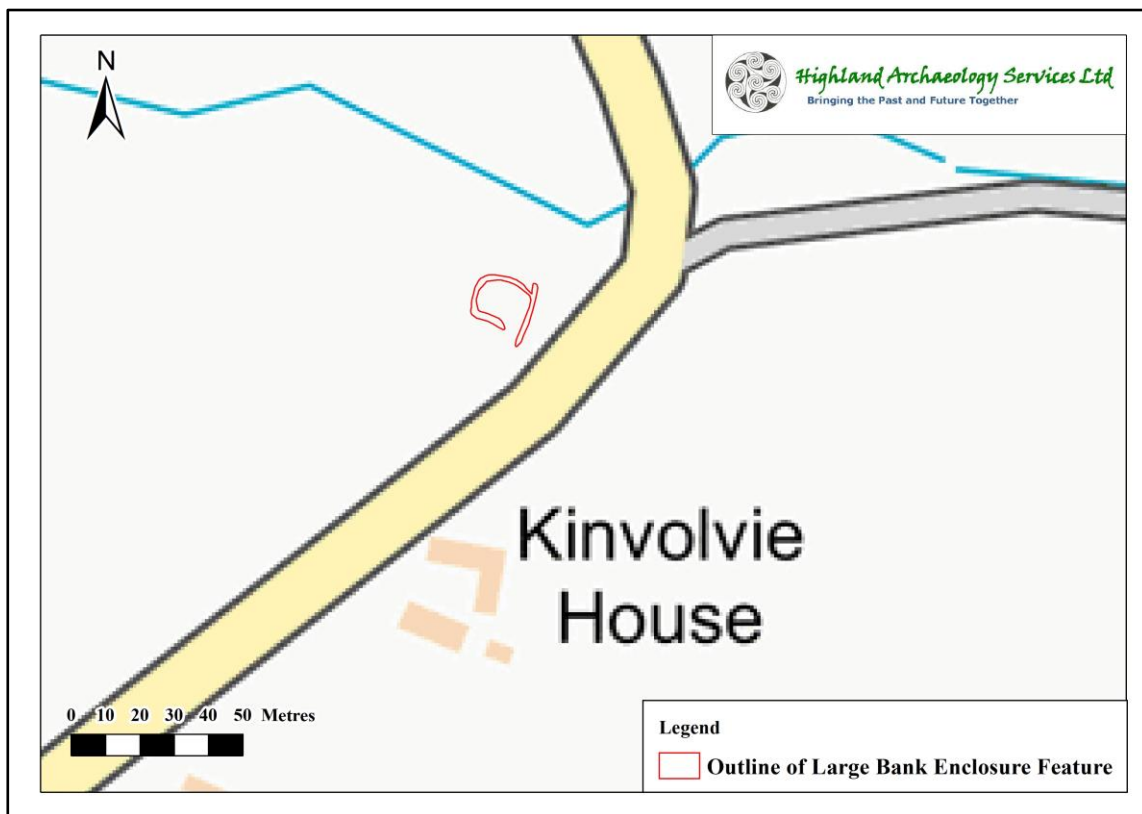


Figure 3: Site location

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## Introduction

A programme of archaeological evaluation by hand excavation was commissioned by Wood Group on behalf of their client SSEN in advance of the development of an agricultural shed in connection with the Lairg to Loch Buidhe OHL replacement.

An earthwork of potential archaeological significance had been identified on the chosen site for the agricultural shed. Through liaison with the Highland Council Archaeological Officer, a strategy was agreed in order to evaluate and characterise the earthwork, the methodology for which is set out below.

The earthwork is visible on satellite aerial images, and appears to take the form of a slightly curved rectangle, broadly oriented north east to south west. It is approximately 26m by 16m with a bank standing up to 20cm high in places, but that is also heavily eroded and broken up in some sections. In some areas there also appears to be a corresponding ditch. Given its shape and size it is likely to be an enclosure.

The earthwork does not appear in any historic maps of the area, including the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map, and has no associated HHER record. This suggests that it may be an unknown feature of archaeological interest dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century or earlier.

## Methodology

### Aims

The aims of the project:

- To evaluate the identified earthwork in order to characterise and record all significant archaeological remains and finds revealed during the course of that work.
- To attempt to recover material sufficient to date and/or interpret the site.
- To present and disseminate the archaeological evidence gathered during the fieldwork and the research potential that evidence has to elucidate the history of the site.

## Evaluation Trenching

The evaluation by trial trenching was undertaken over two days – 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2022. The weather ranged from overcast to sunny and clear skies, with dry spells. The archaeological trial trenching was proposed in order to evaluate the identified earthwork in order to characterise and record all significant archaeological remains and finds revealed during the course of that work.

Two experienced and qualified professional archaeologists excavated and supervised all ground works required for the Trial Trenching work. A mechanical excavator carried out the initial deturfing of grass over the flat section of each trench area, with deturfing of the banks undertaken by hand. The four trenches, which had been strategically placed around the circumference of the grass covered rubble bank enclosure, were then excavated by hand down to natural. All field excavation

was undertaken in accordance with the published standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)



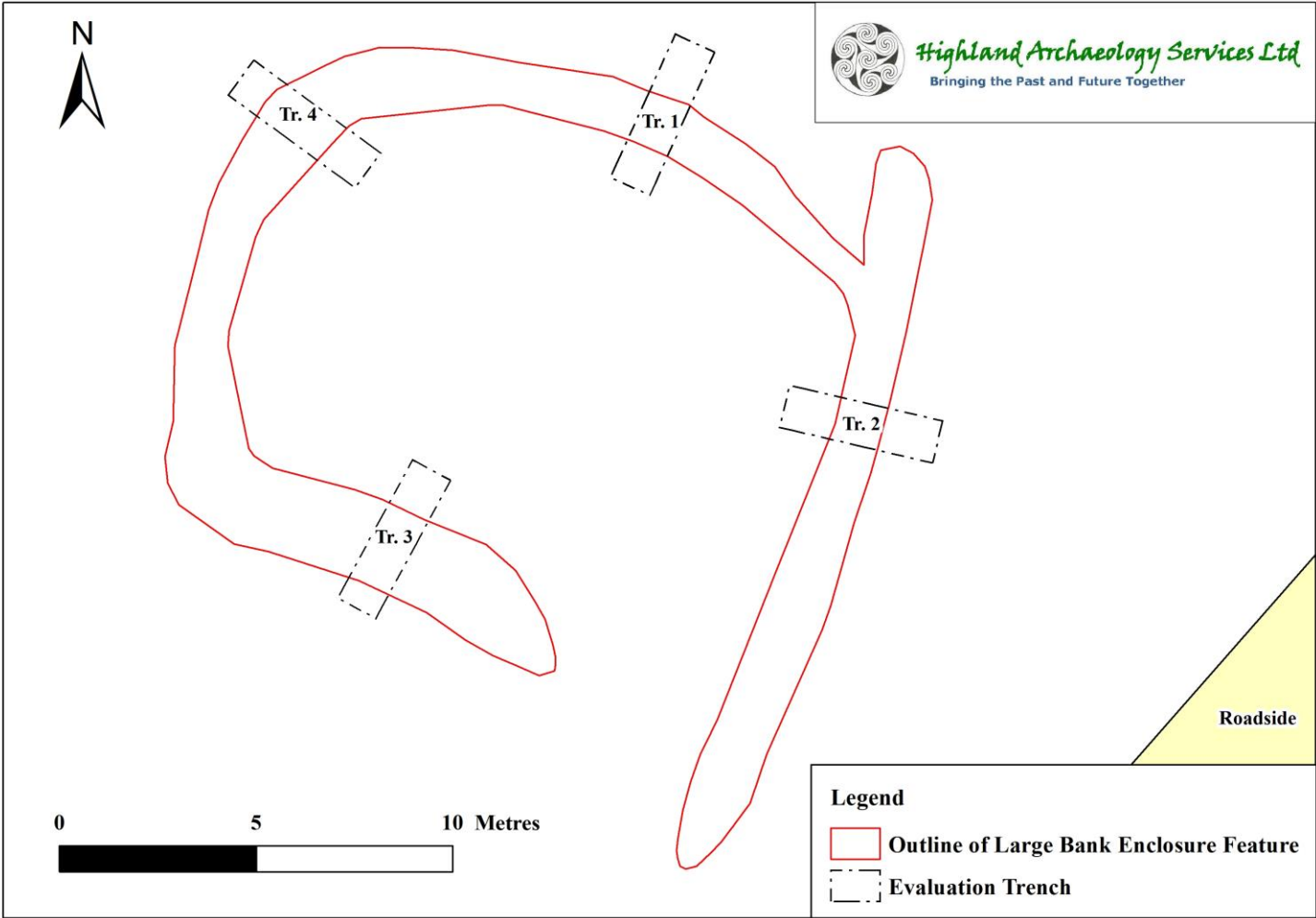


Figure 4: Trench Plan

## *Description of Recorded Archaeology*

Remains of the rubble bank enclosure was located in each of the four trenches. The remains consisted of large rubble stones, mixed with redeposited natural and topsoil forming a bank approximately measuring 26m by 16m. The bank was much more prominent in Trench 4, where the ground elevation dropped along its north-western extent. In Trenches 1-3 the remains of the bank were much fainter.

Some mixed soil and charcoal ashy material was located scattered within the upper topsoil around the southern extent of the feature, most prominent within Trench 3. On conversing with the landowner, he informed the archaeologists that previously a large shed had occupied the site, which had caught fire and burnt down. This may account for the ashy material located in this area. This information may also indicate the bank may have been a modern construction built to house and protect this shed.

## *Trench 1 Findings*

Trench 1, orientated north-east to south-west, measured 4m in length by 1.1m in width. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank comprised of mainly a redeposited natural material (003) and rubble stone measuring 0.9m in width by 0.5m in depth. A small ditch cut [004], located along the banks north-eastern edge appeared to be where the redeposited material had been taken from. Iron handmade nails F001 and two brackets F002 were located in this trench amongst topsoil. A modern wooden stake/fence post was located within centre of the bank, which may indicate a fence once surrounded the area.



Figure 5: Post-ex Trench 1 NW-Facing Section (pic - 4015)

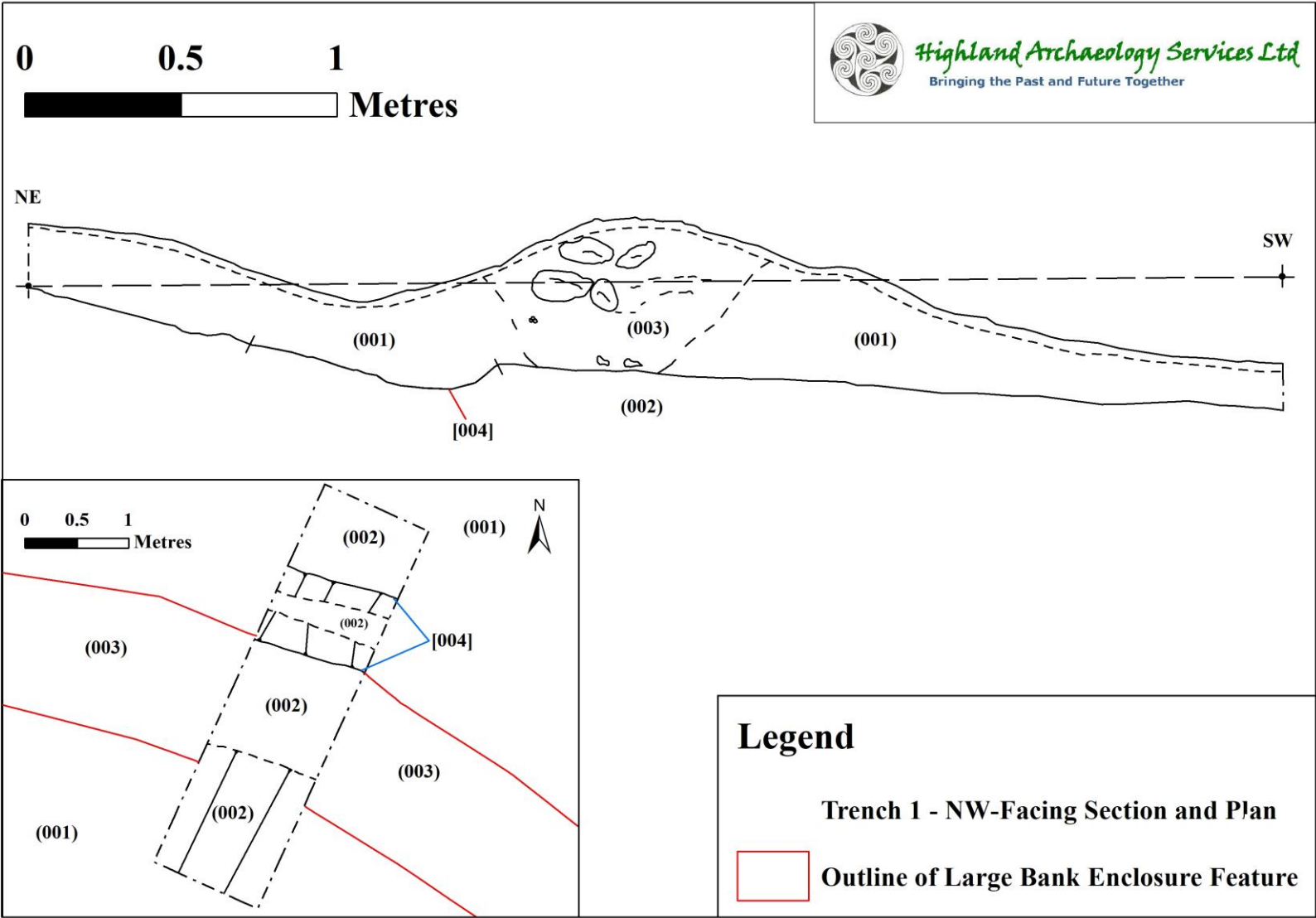


Figure 6: Trench 1 NW-facing Section and Plan



### *Trench 2 Findings*

Trench 2, orientated east to west, measured 4m in length by 1.1mm. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank was much fainter and comprised of mixed topsoil and redeposited natural forming a lump of bank (005), measuring 1.5m in width by 0.25m in depth. No artefacts were recovered from the trench.



**Figure 7: Post-ex Trench 2 S-Facing Section (pic - 4022)**



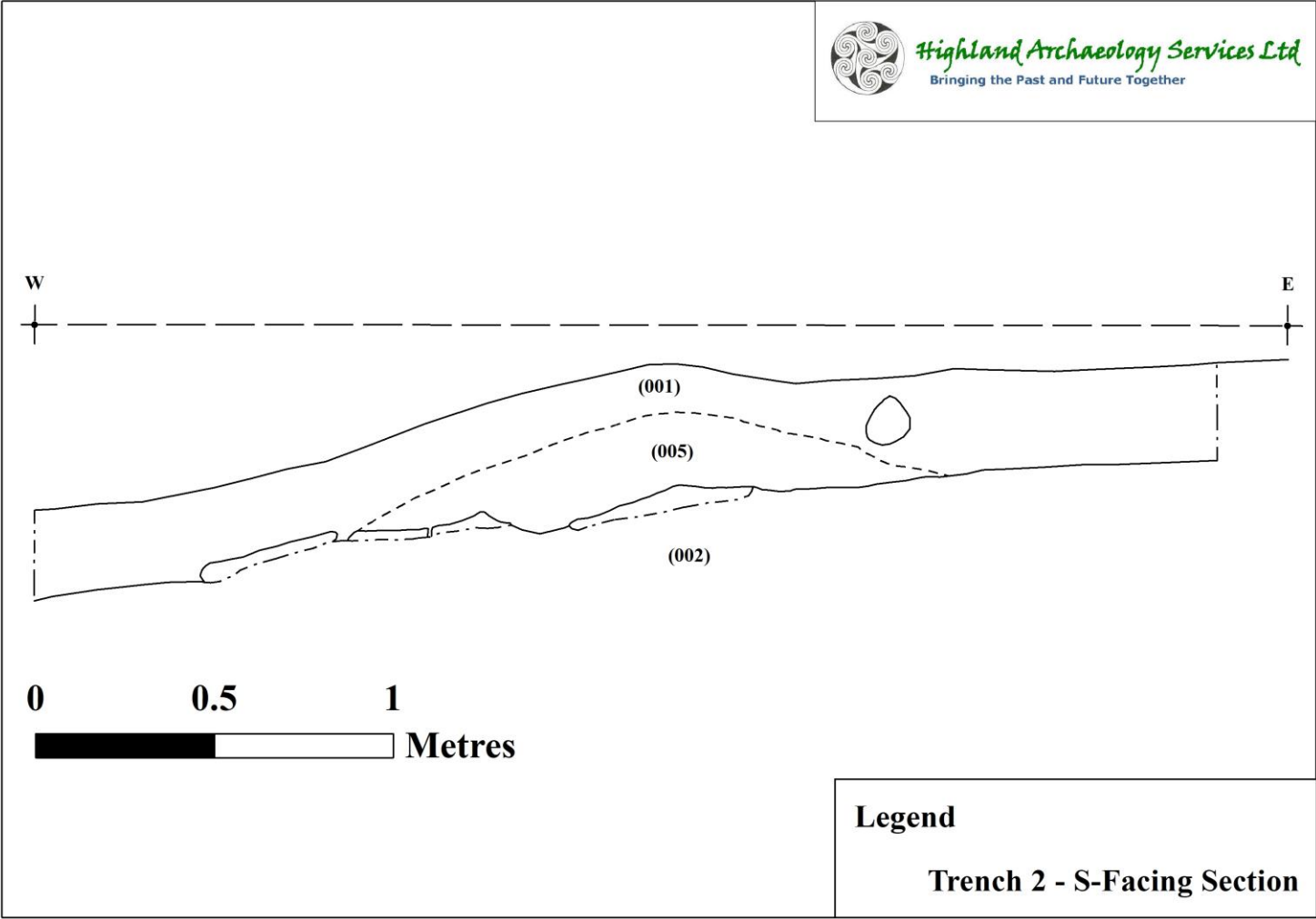


Figure 8: Trench 2 S-Facing Section

### *Trench 3 Findings*

Trench 3, orientated north-east to south-west, measured 4m in length by 1.1m in width. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank comprised of mainly a mixed soil and charcoal ashy material within bank/wall (007) and large rubble stones of various sizes [008], measuring 1.5m in width by 0.3m in depth. A black charcoal-stained soil (006) was located on the western extent of the bank remains. This material was located within the turf down to natural and may be associated with the burning of the shed which previously occupied the area. No artefacts were recovered from the trench.



**Figure 9: SE-facing section of bank in Trench 3 (pic - 4041)**

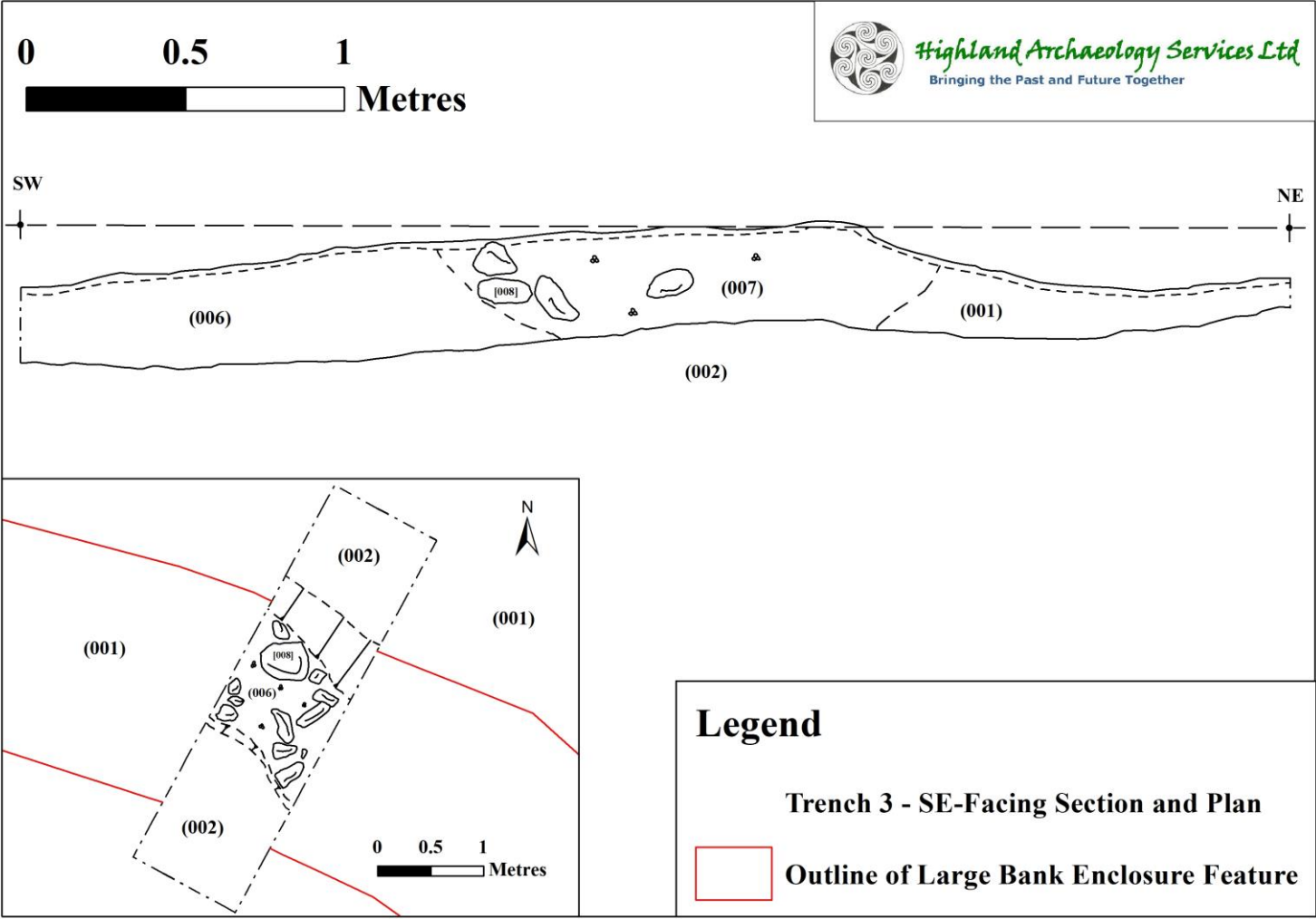


Figure 10: Trench 3, SE-Facing Section and Plan

### *Trench 4 Findings*

Trench 4, orientated north-west to south-east, measured 4m in length by 1.1m in width. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank was very prominent as the elevation drops on its northern extent. Large stones (009) of various sizes make up the body of bank, with some at times appearing to be natural bedrock. The bank measured 0.95m in depth and 3.8m in width. Burnt material including charcoal flecks (010) spread within the southern extent of the trench. This deposit contained F004 iron, F003 glass and a F005 copper alloy knob. These artifacts appear to be from the modern period. Similar to the deposit in Trench 3 (006), this deposit and material may have belonged to the shed which burnt down previously on the site.



**Figure 11: NE-facing section of bank in Trench 4 (pic - 4048)**



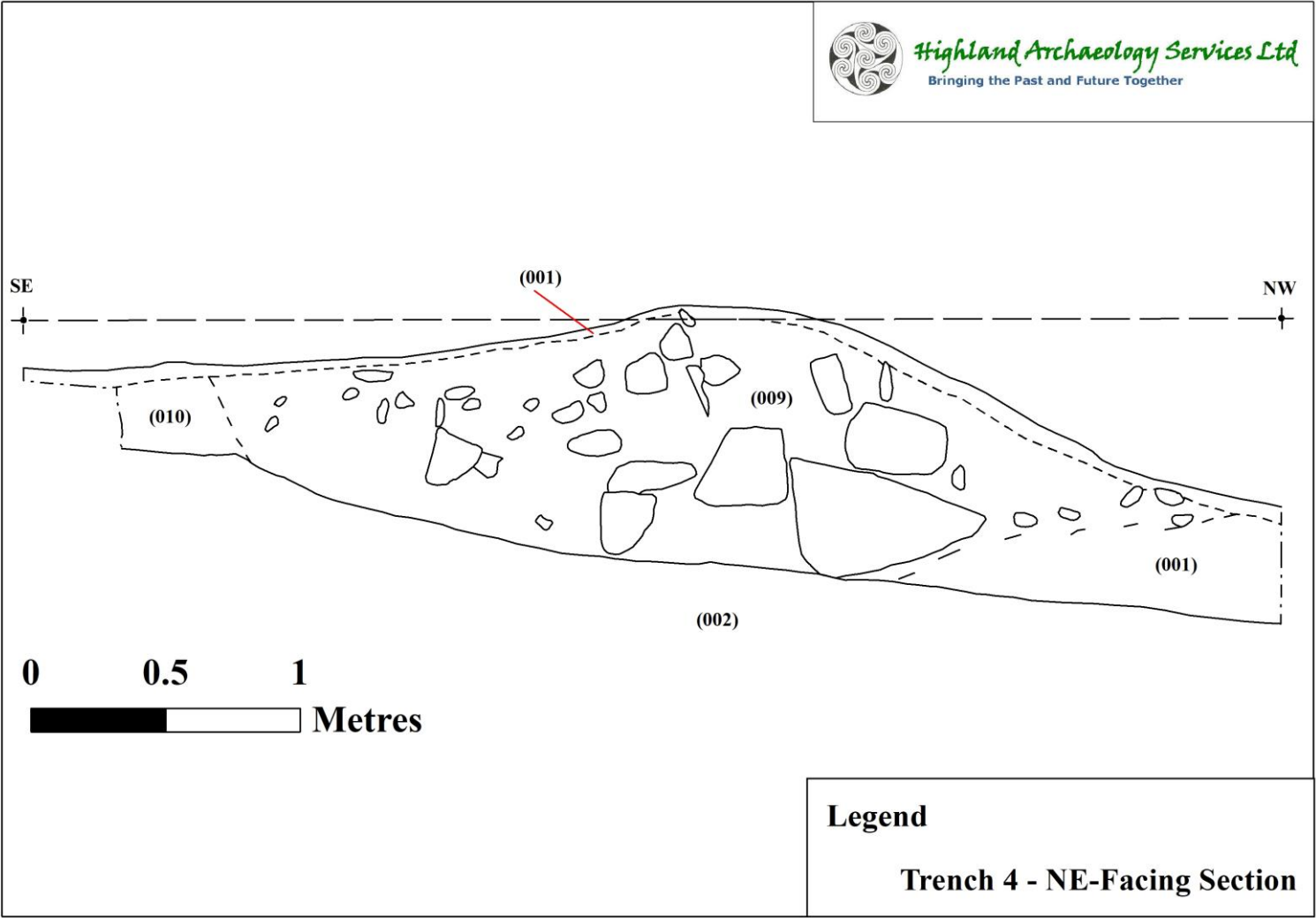


Figure 12: Trench 4, NE-Facing Section

## ***Summary of Finds***

A total of seven metal/iron nails were recovered from Trench 1, along with two iron brackets. A further eight metal/iron nails were recovered, with an assortment of broken glass, some heat affected and a copper alloy knob in Trench 4. These items were recovered from close to the surface and are probably associated with the shed that previously occupied the area before it was burnt down. All the finds appear to be from the modern period.



**Figure 13: Small copper alloy knob located in Trench 4 F005**



**Figure 14: An assortment of modern finds, iron nails, iron bracket and glass, located from Trench 1 and 4**

## Discussion & Conclusions

The fieldwork comprised of the excavation of four hand-dug trenches, strategically placed around the circumference of a grass-covered rubble bank enclosure. The work was carried out over two days.

No significant archaeological features or material was uncovered during the evaluation works. Depths of each trench across sections of the grass covered bank enclosure were recorded from the topsoil down to natural. Recordings were taken digitally with photographs and measurements.

On speaking to the landowner, the area had previously been occupied by a large shed which had burnt down. The grass covered rubble bank enclosure may have been constructed to house and protect this shed from the elements. Finds located from Trench 1 and Trench 4 appear to be of a modern date and are almost certainly associated with this shed.

## Recommendations

As this grass covered rubble bank appears to be associated with the modern shed that previously was located in this area, it is recommended that no further archaeological works are required.

## Archive

A copy of this report will be deposited with the Highland Council for inclusion in the Historic Environment Record and with OASIS. A summary report will also be sent to DES and the project archive will be submitted to HES following completion.

The site archive comprises entirely digital records comprising photographs, registers and GIS files. These will be processed and submitted to HES following completion of the project in accordance with their published guidance. Retained finds will offered to Scottish Treasure Trove.

## Bibliography and References

Canmore 2021: Online Digital resource available at: <https://canmore.org.uk/>

CIFA 2020 'Standards and Guidance' various documents Digital available at:  
<https://www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa>

Highland Council HER: Historic Environment Record available at:  
<https://her.highland.gov.uk/>

Highland Council 2012 '*Highland Council Standards For Archaeological Work*' [.PDF] Inverness, Highland Council. Available at:  
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HS 2016: Historic Scotland 2016 'Historic Scotland Operational Policy Paper 5 – The Treatment of Human Remains in Archaeology'. Edinburgh, Historic Scotland. Digital available at:  
<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=02e7320f-4fb2-4c4a-8aba-a58e00e3f22c>

Scottish Strategic Archaeology Committee (SSAC) 2016 '*Scotland's Archaeology Strategy*' [.PDF] Edinburgh, SSAC. Available at: <http://archaeologystrategy.scot/>

## Appendices

**Table 1: Photo Table**

Photo No.	Camera Point	Facing	Description
3959-3961	CP1	NW	General Pre-ex shots
3962-3964	CP2	N	General Pre-ex shots
3965-3966	CP3	NE	General Pre-ex shots
3967-3968	CP4	SE	General Pre-ex shots
3969-3970	CP5	SW	General Pre-ex shots
3971-3972	CP5	W	General Pre-ex shots TR1
3973-3974	CP6	E	General Pre-ex shots TR1
3975-3976	CP7	S	General Pre-ex shots TR2
3977-3978	CP8	N	General Pre-ex shots TR2
3979-3980	CP9	W	General Pre-ex shots TR3
3981-3982	CP10	E	General Pre-ex shots TR3
3983-3984	CP11	N	General Pre-ex shots TR4
3985-3986	CP12	S	General Pre-ex shots TR4
3987-3988	CP13	E	Showing Tr1 turf excavation
3989-3990	CP14	W	Showing Tr1 turf excavation
3991-3992	CP15	S	Showing Tr4 turf excavation
3993-3994	CP16	N	Showing Tr4 turf excavation
3995-3996	CP17	E	Showing Tr2 turf excavation



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3997-3998	CP18	S	Showing Tr3 turf excavation
3999-4000	CP19	E	Trench 2 mid ex
4001-4007	CP20	E, S, W	Trench 1 mid ex
4008-4009	CP21	E	Post-ex Trench 1
4010-4011	CP21	SE	Post-ex Trench 1 NW Facing Section
4012	CP21	W	Post-ex Trench 1
4013-4017	CP21	SE	Post-ex Trench 1 NW Facing Section
4018-19	CP19	E	Post ex Trench 2
4020	CP22	W	Post ex Trench 2
4021-3	-	N	South facing section trench 2
4024-6	-	S	North facing section trench 2
4027	-	-	Working shot
4028-4035	CP23	Pano	Mid-ex shots of bank/wall with stones Trench3
4036-4043	CP24	Pano	SE-facing section of bank in Trench 3 and post-ex shots of trench
4044	cp25	W	Trench 4 mid ex showing stone pile/ possible wall
4045	CP26	N	Post-ex shots Trench 4
4046	CP26	S	Post-ex shots Trench 4
4047-4049	CP26	W	NE-facing section Trench 4
4050-4053	CP26	E	SW-facing section Trench 4

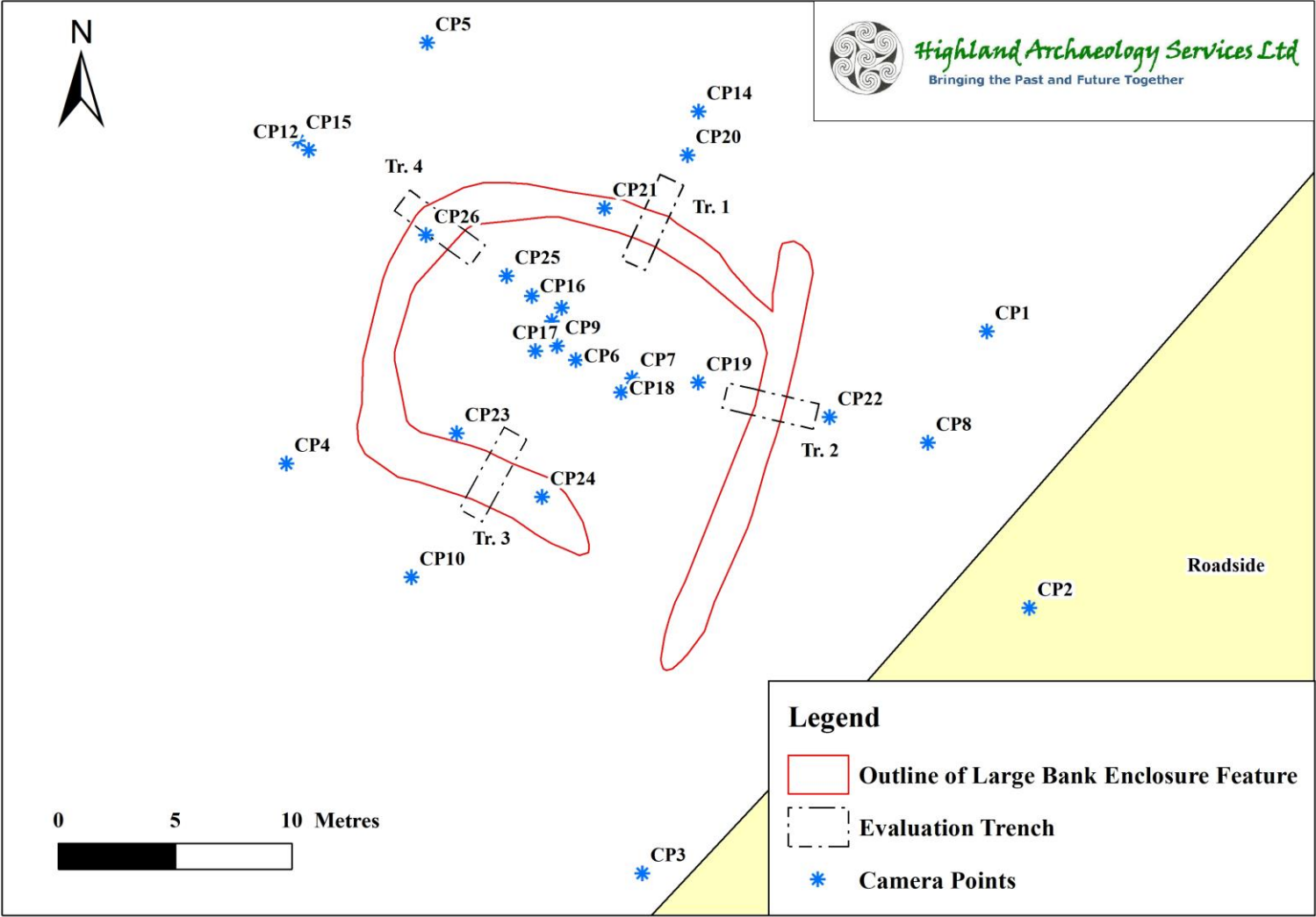


Figure 15: Camera Points Evaluation

**Table 2: Trench Records Evaluation**

<b>Trench</b>	<b>Depth (m)</b>	<b>Description (of trench depths)</b>	<b>Features Within Trench</b>	<b>Finds</b>
Trench 1	0.5m	Trench 1, orientated north-east to south-west, measured 4m in length by 1.1m in width. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank comprised of mainly a redeposited natural material (003) and rubble stone measuring 0.9m in width by 0.5m in depth. A small ditch cut [004], located along the banks north-eastern edge appeared to be where the redeposited material had been taken from. Iron handmade nails F001 and two brackets F002 were located in this trench amongst topsoil. A modern wooden stake/fence post was located within centre of the bank, which may indicate a fence once surrounded the area.	Grass covered rubble bank. Modern fence stake located in centre of bank.	Seven metal/iron nails and two iron brackets
Trench 2	0.25m	Trench 2, orientated east to west, measured 4m in length by 1.1mm. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank was much fainter and comprised of mixed topsoil and redeposited natural forming a lump of bank (005), measuring 1.5m in width by 0.25m in depth. No artefacts were recovered from the trench.	Grass covered rubble bank.	No finds
Trench 3	0.3m	Trench 3, orientated north-east to south-west, measured 4m in length by 1.1m in width. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank comprised of mainly a mixed soil and charcoal ashy material within bank/wall (007) and large rubble stones of various sizes [008], measuring 1.5m in width by 0.3m in depth. A black charcoal-stained soil (006) was located on the western extent of the bank remains. This material was located within the turf down to natural and may be associated with the burning of the shed which previously occupied the area. No artefacts were recovered from the trench.	Grass covered rubble bank.	No finds
Trench 4	0.95m	Trench 4, orientated north-west to south-east, measured 4m in length by 1.1m in width. Within this trench the grass covered rubble bank was very prominent as the elevation drops on its northern extent. Large stones (009) of various sizes make up the body of bank, with some at times appearing to be natural bedrock. The bank measured 0.95m in depth and 3.8m in width. Burnt material including charcoal flecks (010) spread within the southern extent of the trench. This deposit contained F004 iron, F003 glass and a F005 copper alloy knob. These artifacts appear to be from the modern period. Similar to the deposit in Trench 3 (006), this deposit and material may have belonged to the shed which burnt down previously on the site.	Grass covered rubble bank.	Eight metal/iron nails and an assortment of glass, some which had been heat affected

**Table 3: Context Register Evaluation**

Context No.	Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Type (Cut, Fill, Deposit, surface)	Description (include before/after/matrix)	Interpretation
001	All	-	-	0.25m to	Topsoil	Mid brown silt topsoil with frequent small stone and gravel inclusions	Topsoil
002	All	-	-	0.25m to	Natural	An orange/yellow sand and gravel natural with frequent stones of various sizes	Natural sand and gravel
003	Trench 1	Extends Slot	0.9m	0.5m	Deposit	Redeposited natural and topsoil deposit which makes up bank enclosure	Redeposited material used to construct bank
004	Trench 1	Extends Slot	0.75m	0.5m	Cut	Cut on eastern side of bank (003) in Trench 1. filled by topsoil, cut possibly represents where redeposited material 003 was taken from to construct bank	Cut on side of bank for redeposited material in Trench 1
005	Trench 2	1.5m	1m slot	0.25m	Deposit	Orange yellow sand mixed with mid brown topsoil and some small, rounded stones. In band forming bank / part of enclosure	Deposit of sand and topsoil forming bank in Trench 2
006	Trench 3	Extends Slot	1.2m	0.32m	Deposit	Black charcoal-stained soil located on western side of bank/wall remains in Trench 3	Deposit of charcoal-stained soil in Trench 3, associated with former shed burning
007	Trench 3	1.5m	1m slot	0.3m	Deposit	Mixed soil and charcoal ashy material within bank	Deposit of mixed soil and charcoal in Trench 3, associated with former shed burning
008	Trench 3	Extends Slot	1.2m	various	Stone	Large stones of various sizes which make up the line of bank in Trench 3	Large stone used to form bank in Trench 3
009	Trench 4	4m by 1m slot	Various	0.95m	Stone	Large stones of various sizes which make up the body of bank in Trench 4. Some at times appear to be natural bedrock.	Large stones used to form bank in Trench 4
010	Trench 4	Extends Slot	3.8m	0.95m	Deposit	Burnt material including charcoal flecks spread within the southern extent of Trench 4. Contained Iron, glass and copper alloy. Artifacts appear to be modern. conversation with farmer, he stated he had a shed burnt down in this area before, which the finds may belong	Deposit of burnt material in Trench 4, associated with former shed burning



**Table 4: Drawing Register Evaluation**

Drawing No.	Trench	Scale	Sheet No.	Description
1	Trench 1	1:10	1	NW- facing section of Trench 1
2	Trench 1	2:10	1	Plan of Trench 1
3	Trench 2	1:10	2	South facing section trench 2
4	Trench 3	1:20	2	Mid-ex plan of Trench 3
5	Trench 3	1:10	3	SE-Facing section of Trench 3 bank/wall
6	Trench 4	1:10	3 and 4	NE-facing section of bank within Trench 4

**Table 5: Finds Register**

Finds No.	Trench	Context	Material	Description
1	Trench 1	001	Metal/Iron	Seven iron nails located in Trench1 topsoil
2	Trench 1	001	Metal/Iron	Two brackets located in Trench 1 topsoil iron
3	Trench 4	010	Glass	A medium sized assemblage of glass fragments located in southern extent of Trench 4, some showing signs of heat effect
4	Trench 4	010	Metal/Iron	Eight small iron nails located in the southern extent of Trench 4
5	Trench 4	010	Metal/Copper	Small copper alloy handle or small round knob located in southern extent of Trench 4
6	Trench 1	001	Metal/Iron	Seven iron nails located in Trench1 topsoil

