

# **Mull to Iona Under Sea Pipeline Water Main and WWTP Construction**

## **Isle of Iona, Argyll**



## **Archaeological Watching Brief Report**

<b>Client</b>	Scottish Water
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	NM 28906 24759
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**Mull to Iona Under Sea Pipeline  
Water Main and WWTP Construction  
Isle of Iona, Argyll**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1** Archaeological monitoring was requested by Scottish Water in relation to the construction of a new water main pipeline on the Isle of Iona. The pipeline route will come across the Sound of Iona from Mull and use an existing pipeline from Port an Disearc (NM 2895 2480) on the east coast of the island, up to the north road. Groundworks included excavations around an existing water tank on the shore on Iona, while a route was waymarked for the movement of a mechanical excavator from the road down to the shore at the site of the tank. The area is located immediately north of St Mary's Abbey, and south of Cladh an Disearc, both Scheduled Monuments and the island is renowned for its archaeological and historical significance relating particularly to these early Christian sites. The Isle of Iona lies within the administration of Argyll and Bute Council and is advised on archaeological matters by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service.
- 1.2** In keeping with the policies outlined in Scottish Planning Policy (2010) and PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology (2011), archaeological monitoring was undertaken during ground works. This report summarises the results of the fieldwork.

## **2 Site location**

- 2.1** The Isle of Iona is a small island in the Inner Hebrides, located just under a mile off the west coast of the Isle of Mull. The island is reached via a small ferry that comes across from the village of Fionnphort, a traditional route that has been in use for centuries. The route of the pipeline starts on the Isle of Mull, half a mile north of Fionnphort.
- 2.2** The pipe will be laid on the sea bed and proceed northwest until making land at Port an Disearc, where it will take a westerly route up to the north road through the island using an existing pipeline. The landward route runs in between two archaeologically sensitive areas and a route was waymarked to move a mechanical excavator down to the shore where an existing water tank is located. The archaeological works included monitoring of the movement of the mechanical excavator from the road to the shoreline location where the underwater pipeline would make landfall on Iona, and to monitor small-scale excavations at the water tank to expose the tank and associated infrastructure. Scheduled Monument SM12968 St Mary's Abbey is located to the south and Schedule Monument SM804 Cladh an Disearc is located to the north (**Figure 1**).
- 2.3** The geology of this part of the Isle of Iona comprises Hornfelsed Metasandstone and Siltstone with overlying Raised Marine deposits of gravels, silts and sands.

### **3 Archaeological Background**

- 3.1** The Isle of Iona has a rich and renowned archaeological landscape. Touted as Scotland's 'cradle of Christianity', it was in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century AD that St Columba established here a monastery that would become the most iconic of all of Scotland's places of Christian worship. The island is known in Gaelic today as *Ì Chaluim Chille* – Columba's Island. The establishment of this prominent Christian centre drew the attention of the Vikings, and like the island of Lindisfarne, Iona was attacked and raided multiple times in the later first millennium AD. The Book of Kells, one of the most famous relics of this era, was famously removed in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD from here to Kells in Ireland in order to safeguard it from these attacks.
- 3.2** A Benedictine abbey was constructed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD over the Columban site, and this stands today as the famous Iona (St Mary's) Abbey.

### **4 Objectives**

- 4.1 To assess the proposed route prior to the machine movement between two nationally protected heritage sites, to ensure minimal disturbance to the ground takes place.
- 4.2 To propose mitigation recommendations in advance of the development in order to safeguard any significant archaeology and to minimise delays to the programme.
- 4.3 To monitor excavation works during ground-breaking works for a new water tank and to ensure pipeline construction is undertaken along the existing water main route
- 4.4 To determine and assess the character, extent, condition, quality, date and significance of the archaeological remains exposed during ground works
- 4.5 To excavate and record any archaeological features that would be damaged or destroyed
- 4.6 To sample deposits for post-excavation work, including environmental analysis and dating

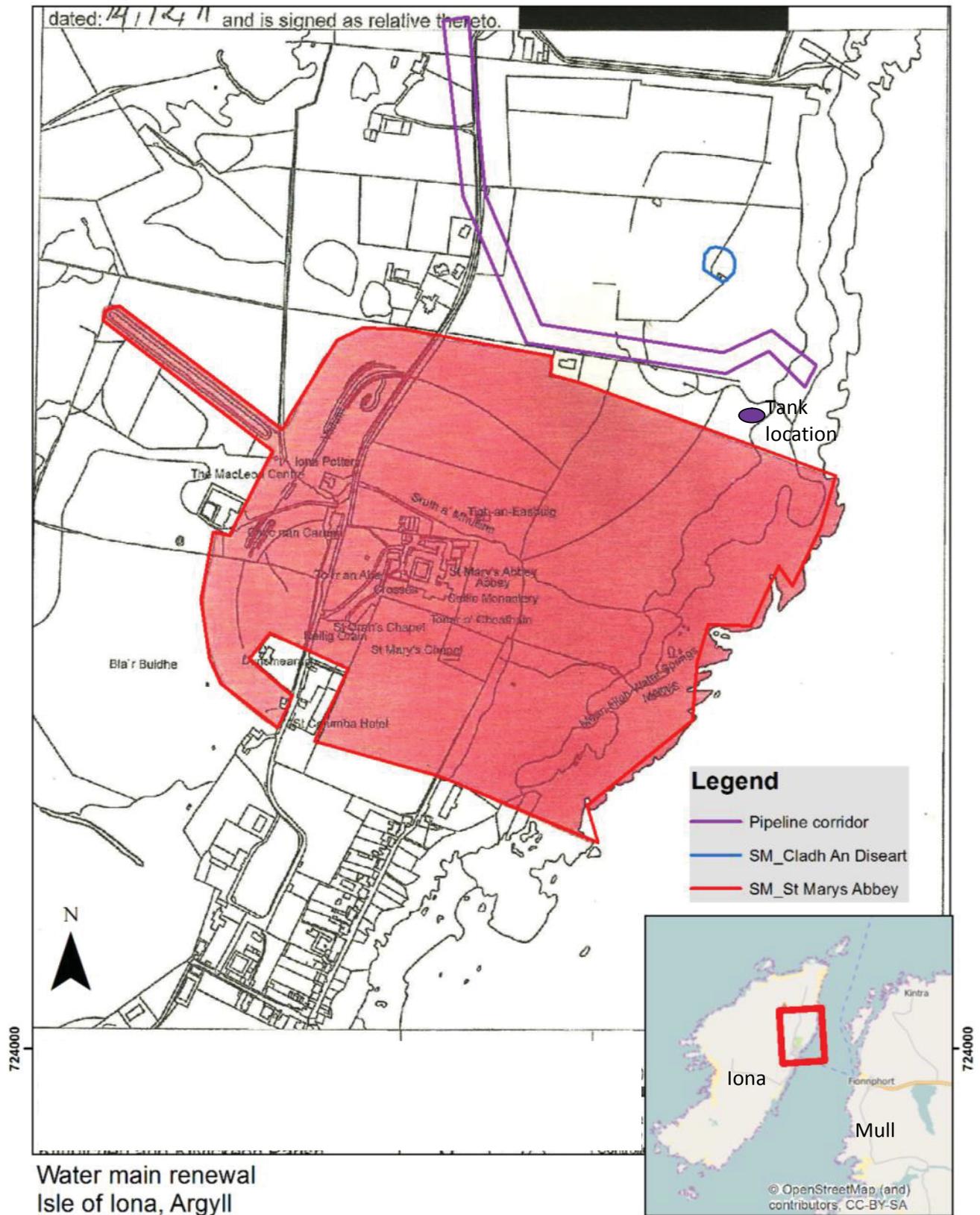


Figure 1: Location map of the water main pipeline route and tank location (map provided by Scottish Water)

## **5 Desk Based Assessment**

### **5.1 Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

5.1.1 The archaeological monitoring was undertaken between the locations of two Scheduled Monument areas.

#### **Cladh an Disert Chapel – SM 804                      NM 2895 2484**

Cladh an Disert, "Burial-ground of the Hermitage" - or "Cladh Iain" - "John's Burial-ground", is a turf-covered enclosure about 20 yds square, within which are the remains of a building. A lintel stone is said to have lain across the two portal stones of the enclosure and a heart-shaped granite boulder inscribed with a Celtic cross was found about 150 yds from it – this is now in the Abbey Museum. A fragment of a crucifixion cross is also said to have come from the enclosure. While the date of the site is unclear, there is a reference to a hermitage on Iona in 747 and the "Disertach" of Iona is mentioned in 1164.

Immediately SW of Cladh an Disert, Reeve's map shows "Leacht", but as he makes no mention of it, it is not known if this is merely a place-name, or if there was in fact a "leacht". Oval enclosures are mentioned as being seen on air photographs at Cladh an Disert, in an anonymous note on OS 6" record sheet, but these have not been identified.

There is a cobbled road from the E corner that leads to Port an Disert. At the port are two parallel earthen banks (NM 2897 2473) forming a type of dry dock for a boat, as still used in the Northern Isles.

#### **St Mary's Abbey – SM 12968                      NM 2867 2451**

The Benedictine Abbey was founded in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century over the early Christian monastery associated with St Columba. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery became the Cathedral of the Bishops of the Isles.

### **5.2 Sites and Monuments Record**

5.2.1 The following sites were noted in the vicinity of the watching brief corridor and water tank site:

#### **WoSAS Pin 15474                      NM 2855 2518                      Auchabhaich – watching briefs**

Along the eastern shoreline, at the east end of the present watching brief corridor, a series of watching briefs were undertaken in 1993-4 during construction of the new Iona water supply pipeline. Little of archaeological interest was discovered during this period,

**WoSAS Pin 13076    NM 29040 24720    Boat naust, Port an Disart**

The location of a boat naust at Port an Disart, in the general location of the water tank site, was identified by RCAHMS in 1982. An archaeological evaluation in 1993 noted that the naust was still clearly visible, suggesting a post medieval date.

**WoSAS Pin 13082    NM 2908 2477    Port an Disart, Trial Excavation**

During an archaeological evaluation of a proposed pipeline route in 1993 a trench was dug close to the shoreline to the north of the east end of the present watching brief corridor. Directly below the turf a layer of loose angular stonework was located. This material was not waterworn and was interpreted as dumped material. Amongst this, lying directly under the turf, a piece of badly decayed ironware of indeterminable nature was recovered.

**WoSASPIN 13083    NM 2882 2476    Clachanach, linear cropmark, ditch**

Located within the watching brief corridor, excavation of a linear cropmark was shown to have been undertaken. The work revealed a field boundary ditch and small finds included struck flint, slag and pottery.

## **6 Results**

- 6.1 The access route used to move the mechanical excavator from the north road down to the shore ran along the corridor used by the water main pipeline, ground which had already been disturbed, between the Scheduled Monument of Cladh an Disart (**Plate 1 – Plate 3**) and the Scheduled Monument area for the Abbey to the south. The route was marked out with flags and canes as a safe corridor for machine movement and access for the tracked machine was monitored for ground disturbance. None was noted.
- 6.2 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during excavation around the water tank and channel for the pipeline route to the shoreline (**Plate 4 – Plate 6**). No archaeological finds or deposits were noted.
- 6.3 The remaining pipeline route utilised an existing water main and no ground was disturbed.

## **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Although it is not anticipated that further groundworks will be required during the development, if the methodology changes it is recommended that any new ground-breaking be monitored by an archaeologist.



Plate 1: Looking W, over wall running alongside the access track near Cladh an Disert



Plate 2: Looking SE across Cladh an Disert



Plate 3: Looking SSE over Cladh an Discart



Plate 4: Post-excavation image of the E side of the water tank, facing NW



Plate 5: Post-excavation image of the channel to the water tank, facing NNW



Plate 6: Post-excavation image of the E side of the water tank, facing NNE

## 8 References

WoSAS 2016. Historic Environment Record. Accessed online on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at <http://www.wosas.net>.

National Library of Scotland. 2016. Accessed online on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at: <http://maps.nls.uk>.

Scottish Government. 2010. *Scottish Planning Policy*.

Scottish Government. 2011. *PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology*.

**Appendix 1: List of Site Photographs**

<b>Photo No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Direction Facing</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Water pipe tank site	SE	SW	30/03/2016
2	Possible boat naust site	E	SW	30/03/2016
3	Possible boat naust site	NE	SW	30/03/2016
4	Possible boat naust site	N	SW	30/03/2016
5	Possible boat naust site	SE	SW	30/03/2016
6	Possible boat naust site	E	SW	30/03/2016
7	Looking uphill across Cladh an Diseart	W	SW	30/03/2016
8	Panorama across site	W-E	SW	30/03/2016
9	Existing stone wall	NW	SW	30/03/2016
10	Existing stone wall	ENE	SW	31/03/2016
11	Existing stone wall	NNE	SW	31/03/2016
12	Existing stone wall	N	SW	31/03/2016
13	Large stone with hole in it	N	SW	31/03/2016
14	Existing stone wall	NE	SW	31/03/2016
15	Possible boat naust site	E	SW	31/03/2016
16	Possible boat naust site	WNW	SW	31/03/2016
17	Possible boat naust site	-	SW	31/03/2016
18	Possible boat naust site	-	SW	31/03/2016
19	Possible boat naust site	-	SW	31/03/2016
20	Possible boat naust site	-	SW	31/03/2016
21	Possible boat naust site	-	SW	31/03/2016
22	Furthest point of surviving wall along Cladh an Diseart	-	SW	31/03/2016
23	Wall alongside Cladh an Diseart with farm track in background demonstrating susceptibility of area to damage	-	SW	31/03/2016
24	General view across Cladh an Diseart site	W	SW	31/03/2016
25	Cladh an Diseart with Grianan in the background	S	SW	31/03/2016
26	Panorama of Cladh an Diseart	E-S	SW	31/03/2016
27	Cladh an Diseart	NNE	SW	31/03/2016
28	General view across site where the pipeline will be laid, Iona Abbey in background	E-S	SW	31/03/2016
29	Panorama of Cladh an Diseart	NNE-ESE	SW	31/03/2016
30	E coastline of Iona with Iona Abbey to the left and the development area situated immediately behind Grianan, the off-centre white house	WNW	SW	30/03/2016
31	Panorama of landscape from the top of the field, looking across route to be taken by machine	ENE - S	SW	30/03/2016

Mull to Iona Under Sea Pipeline: Water Main and WWTP construction, Isle of Iona, Argyll

<b>Photo No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Direction Facing</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Date</b>
32	Looking down towards the existing water tank, situated at the end of the wall	ESE	SW	30/03/2016
33	Looking up hill towards Grianan house	WSW	SW	30/03/2016
34	Collection of large boulders along route	S	SW	30/03/2016
35	Post-excavation image of the E side of the water tank	NW	LF	11/05/2016
36	Post-excavation image of the E side of the water tank	S	LF	11/05/2016
37	Excavated channel to the water tank	NNW	LF	11/05/2016
38	Excavated channel to the water tank	N	LF	11/05/2016
39	Post-excavation image of the E side of the water tank	NNE	LF	11/05/2016
40	Cladh an Discart and site	SSE	LF	11/05/2016
41	Cladh an Discart and site	SSE	LF	11/05/2016
42	Track through scheduled area	ESE	LF	11/05/2016
43	Track through scheduled area	ESE	LF	11/05/2016
44	Track through scheduled area	SE	LF	11/05/2016
45	Track through scheduled area	S	LF	11/05/2016