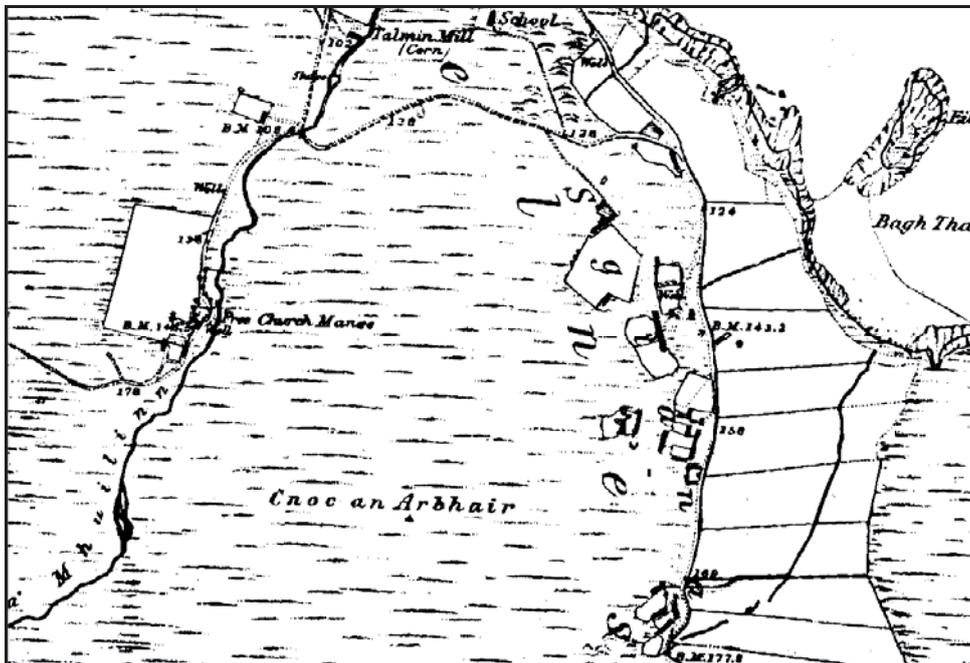




Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the past and future together

Desk Based Assessment



Skinnet – Melness Water Main Renewal

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Desk Based Assessment

Skinnet – Melness Water Main Renewal

Report No.	HAS070607
Project code	SKM07
Client	Halcrow PLC
Planning Ref	N/A
Date	22 June 2007
Author	John Wood

Summary

A desk based assessment was conducted to establish as far as possible the nature and extent of any archaeology likely to be affected by the construction of a new raw water main at Skinnet, Melness, Sutherland.

A watching brief is recommended in two areas only- at each end of the pipeline.

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Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the client, Halcrow PLC, for commissioning this report. Background mapping has been reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey under Licence 100043217.

Introduction and Planning Background

A desk based assessment was conducted in June 2007 to establish as far as possible the nature and extent of any archaeology likely to be affected by the construction of a new water main at Skinnet, Melness.

The programme consisted of a desk-based assessment only. This report summarises the results.

Location

The new water main is intended to run from approximately Ordnance Survey Grid Reference NC 5822 6215 to NC 5818 6127.



Figure 1 Project Location

Aims and Objectives

The overall aims of this assessment are to:

1. Identify any recorded archaeological sites or features that might be affected by this work
2. Propose mitigation or recording as appropriate to ensure that archaeological evidence is not unnecessarily damaged or destroyed.
3. Minimize any possible delay or costs to the development by anticipating any archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.

Archaeological background and cultural significance

The proposed water main will run for approximately 2.5 km and require open cutting of trenches for new pipe. This is a crofting landscape, where many details found on the First Edition OS 1:10560 Map of 1878 can still be seen today (See cover and Fig 2). No Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings lie directly on the line of the proposed water main, although Talmine Water Mill to the north of the line is Scheduled together with land to its south-west running as far as the Manse Bridge.

Method

Desk Based Assessment

The route as supplied by the client was digitised against a 1:10,000 scale map displayed at a scale of approximately 1:2500. This was then checked in detail against the archaeological records, maps and aerial photographs. The offices of the Highland Council Historic Environment Record were visited but no archaeological reports were found relevant to the water main line. There is only one RAF vertical aerial photograph held there that has relevance to this project: No 106G/UK/0075: 3150, which covers part of the Midtown area.

The National Monuments Record for Scotland, the First Edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps, and the map collections of the National Library of Scotland were checked online¹. An extract from the first edition Ordnance Survey map (1878) is reproduced on the cover of this report.

Results

Sites and features are listed by Highland Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) No. See Fig 2 above for locations.

1	Midtown
Type	Township
HSMR	NC56SE0027
NMRS	NC56SE 25
Notes	This record was made as a result a desk-based exercise (the First Edition Survey Project) carried out the RCAHMS in 1996 to locate unroofed buildings on the First Edition OS 1:10560 maps. The Commission noted 'A crofting township comprising one unroofed and twenty-three roofed buildings is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xvi). The township is shown containing seven unroofed and nineteen roofed buildings on the current edition of the OS 1:10,560 map (1962)'. The pipeline follows the northern edge of Midtown and it would be advisable to note details and locations of any dykes and other features crossed in this area.

¹ www.rcahms.gov.uk/; www.nls.uk/collections/maps/index.html; <http://www.old-maps.co.uk/>

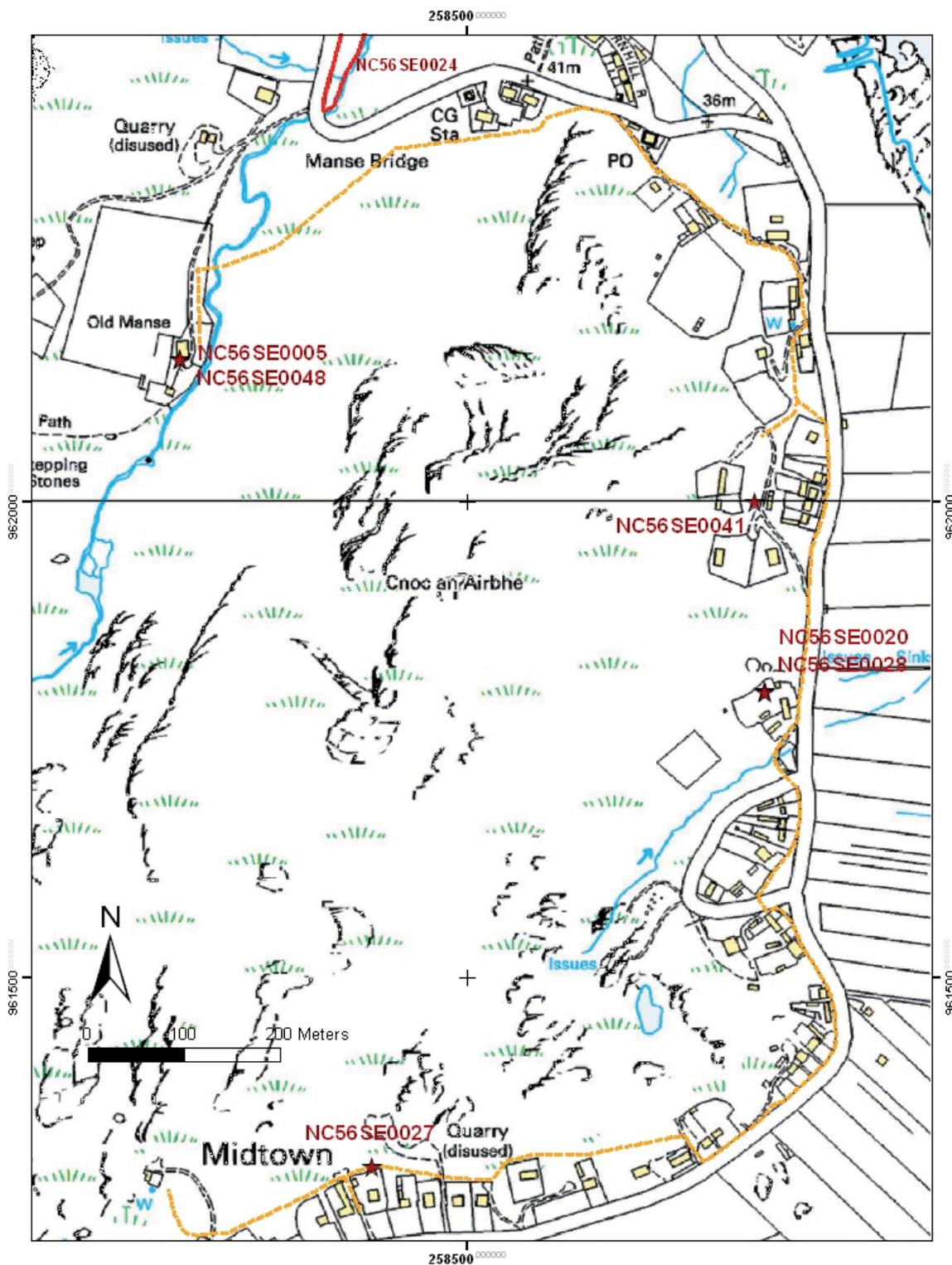


Figure 2 Approximate line of water main, with recorded co-ordinates of archaeology sites
 Please note that this has been drawn based on engineering drawings supplied and is indicative only.

2	Midden, Cnoc an Airbhe
Type	Shell Midden
HSMR	NC56SE0020
NMRS	NC56SE 29
Notes	A Shell midden 'of uncertain date' was noted by The Ordnance Survey in 1971 and 1977. However shellfish were quite a common item in the diet of many Highlanders at different periods including the 19 th century.
3	Neolithic Axe, Near Manse of Melness
Type	Stone Axe
HSMR	NC56SE0005
NMRS	NC56SE 5
Notes	A polished limestone axe, 11 1/4ins.long, with a small circular perforation through the butt, was found near the Free Church Manse of Melness in 1856. It was exhibited to Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1897, by Rev Cathel Kerr. (Proc Soc Antiq Scot 1897) No further information could be discovered during field investigation by the Ordnance Survey in 1971. However although it may be a stray find, there could possibly be further Neolithic (c. 6000 to 4,400 years ago) evidence in the area, and a watching brief is advised here.
4	Skinnet, Melness
Type	Township
HSMR	NC56SE0041
NMRS	NC56SE 1.00
Notes	This record was made as a result a desk-based exercise (the First Edition Survey Project) carried out the RCAHMS in 1996 to locate unroofed buildings on the First Edition OS 1:10560 maps. The Commission recorded, 'A crofting township comprising ten unroofed and eighty roofed buildings is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xvi). The township is shown as twelve unroofed and fifty-five roofed buildings (one of which is a church and one a smithy at NC56SE 22) on the current edition of the OS 1:10,560 map (1962)'. It is unlikely to have implications for the water main project, which follows the line of the public road through the settlement.
5	Smithy, Melness
Type	Smithy
HSMR	NC56SE0028
NMRS	NC56SE 22

Notes | “18th to 19th century. A very small, two-bay, single-storey building with a wooden lean-to extension. Now a store.” J R Hume 1977² This is unlikely to be affected.

6 | Talmine

Type | Watermill

HSMR | NC56SE0024

NMRS | NC56SE 21

Notes | This site is a Scheduled Monument. The Scheduled area extends south-west from the mill to Manse Bridge. It should not be affected by the currently proposed route. Corn mill, Talmine, early 19th century. The roofless ruin of a rectangular corn mill dating from the early 19th c. It is a ‘drystone rubble building with the axle, one pair of spokes and a ring-section of a 4-spoke, high-breast or pitch back wheel, 23.5ins (0.6m) wide by 8ft (2.44m) diameter which had an iron axle and spokes and wooden ring and buckets. The single pair of stones was 50ins (1.27m) in diameter. Part of the wooden-toothed pit wheel survives. The rubble kiln base is intact.’ J R Hume (Ibid).

7 | Melness, Old Manse

Type | Religion; Residential/ Manse

HSMR | NC56SE0048

NMRS | NC56SE 39

Notes | Although recorded on both local and national records there are no details, it is not a Listed building, and it will not be affected.

Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

For most of its route the new water main will follow the existing roads where archaeology is likely to have been disturbed or destroyed by road construction and repairs. It cuts across open ground at its two extremities, however.

There are no recommendations in this case for modifications to the scheme to avoid key archaeological features. However this report has been based on plans marked ‘Preliminary’. Provided the line currently proposed is adhered to, the Scheduled monument at Talmine Water Mill to the north of the line should not be affected and there are unlikely to be many other archaeological implications in this case. However any major alterations to the route should be notified so that we can check them.

There is some potential for buried archaeological artefacts or features to be found almost anywhere in the peatland during the cutting of the pipe trench. Peat preserves organic materials in anaerobic conditions which otherwise do not normally survive. It also covers large areas of Neolithic and Bronze Age landscapes abandoned as the onset of its formation. Monitoring of trench cutting by an Archaeologist might be advisable south of Manse Bridge, where a Neolithic axe was found in the 19th century, and also along the north side of Midtown where there are features marked on the first edition OS map. Otherwise, we recommend only that contractors should be advised to inform us immediately in the event of any discoveries so that they can be recorded without delay to the work.

² Hume, J R (1977) The Industrial Archaeology of Scotland, 2, the Highlands and Islands, London