

**Land South West of Castle Of Fiddes,
Home Farm Barras, Stonehaven
AB39 2XX, Aberdeenshire**

**Report on archaeological watching brief for wind turbine
base and cabling trenches**



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Cover NE trench with Castle of Fiddes in background; facing NE

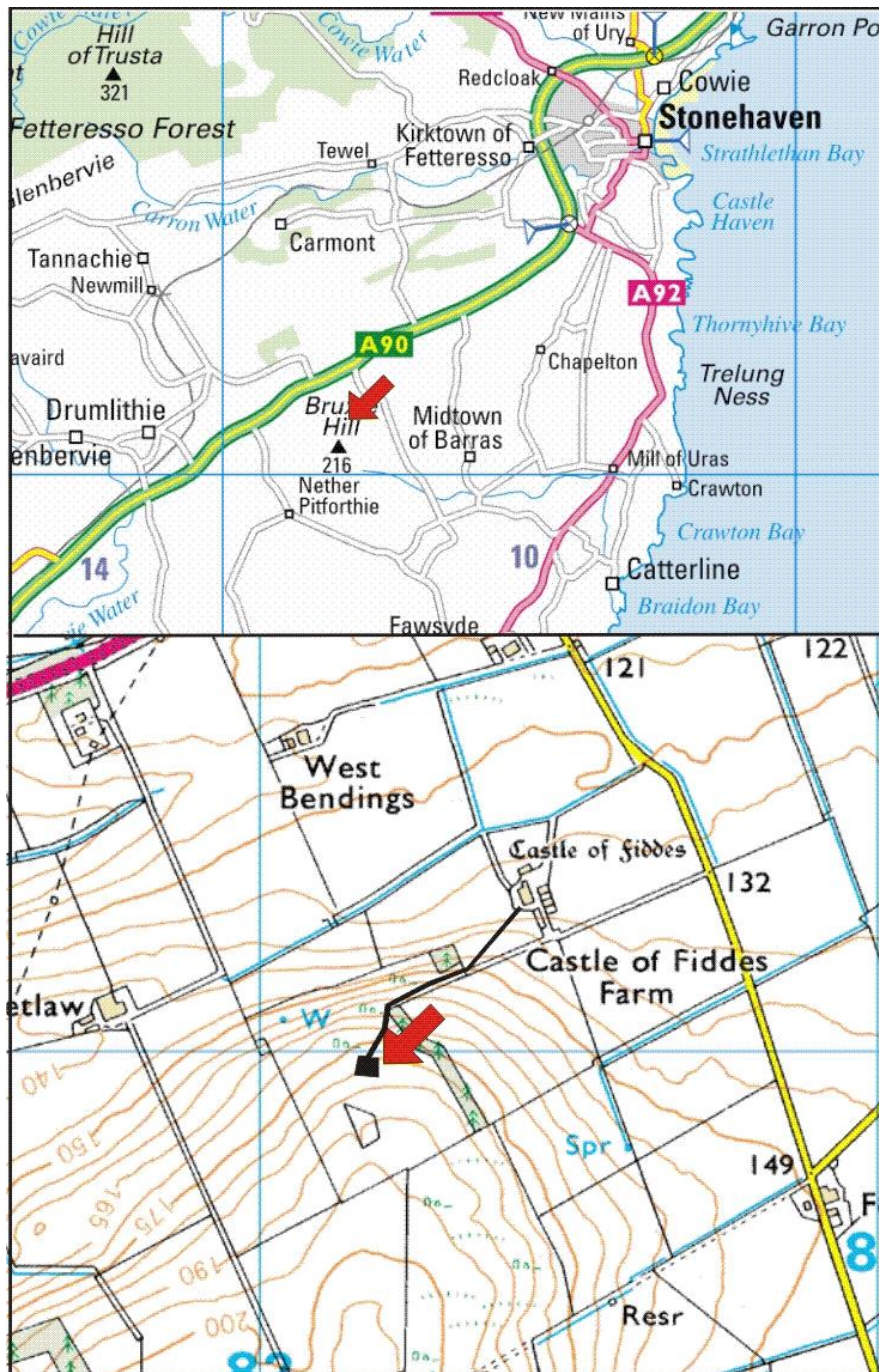
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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on 15.4.14 using a 20 ton tracked machine with 1.8m ditching bucket for the topsoil strip for a proposed wind turbine base and cabling trenches. All the trenches were 3m wide and the base for the turbine was 4 x 4m in size. The SW trench and the turbine base were excavated in relatively unimproved hill pasture on a steep NNW facing slope on the south side of the valley. There were numerous linear and circular earthworks, caused according to the owner of the Castle by tree planting and felling after WWI. The topsoil was less than 5cm thick in this area and the subsoil was fragmented stone. The NE trench was excavated through a ploughed field. The topsoil was 0.5m deep at the NE end of the trench and shallowed to 0.25m at the SW end of the field. No archaeological finds or features were recorded and it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during this work.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site is SW of Castle of Fiddes in the parish of Kinneff at NO 8217 8095 and at 130-175m OD.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Jim Welsh of Ampair. A planning application APP/2013/0818 for the erection of 1 No. 20kw (15m to Hub, Total Height 20m) Wind Turbine was passed on 6.6.13 with an archaeology condition (condition 5) for an archaeological watching brief on the soil strip for the turbine base and cabling trenches.
- 1.3 All the archaeological work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), which state that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2014)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

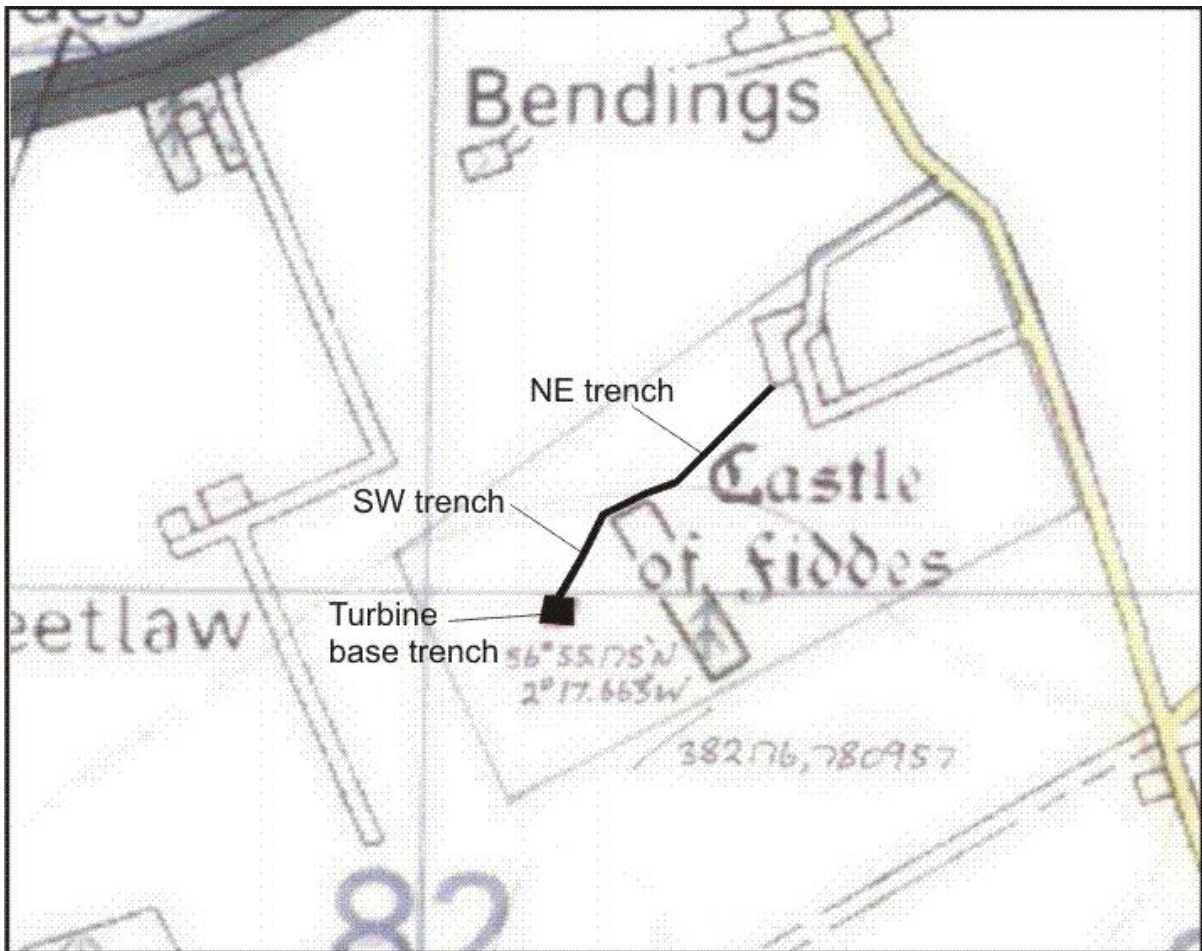
- 2.1 670m SSE of the turbine base is a Scheduled Ancient monument Bruxie Hill long cairn (NO88SW 21). The monument includes the remains of a long mound of stones and earth. It is 35m long EW; trapezoidal, it measures 20m across at its east end and 12m across at its west end. The middle portions of the mound stand about 0.6m above the surrounding ground and the rim of material defining its edges stands to about 0.8m. The area to be scheduled includes ground in which traces of activities associated with the mound will survive; it is centred on the monument and measures 60m EW by 50m NS. The monument is of national importance as one of the few surviving examples of early Neolithic unchambered burial mounds, and for its potential contribution to our understanding of burial and farming practices of the east of Scotland in the Neolithic. The large earthen component of its makeup suggests evidence of internal timber structures will survive, while the old ground surface underneath it will preserve evidence of the vegetation and farming practices of the area in the 4th millennium BC.
- 2.2 Castle of Fiddes is a 16th-century tower house. The general arrangement is that of the L-plan, but instead of the staircase being kept within the re-entering angle it is projected in a large circular tower beyond the corner of the main building. Another circular tower occupies the corresponding angle on the opposite side of the main building, and a third is corbelled out from the first floor (MacGibbon and Ross 1887-92, 142-4). There is an associated farm
- 2.3 Part of the head of a Celtic cross-slab (NO88SW 17) was found at NO 8243 8128, amongst rubble, after renovations to farm outbuildings at Castle of Fiddes (NO88SW 4) in 1964. It is preserved inside the castle. The cross-slab fragment was removed from Castle of Fiddes in the 1970's and is now in private ownership in Devon. A stone font, probably of medieval date, was also removed from the site and taken to Devon.

3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on 15.4.14 using a 20 ton tracked machine with 1.8m ditching bucket. All the trenches were 3m wide and the base for the turbine was 4 x 4m in size. The SW trench and the turbine base were excavated in relatively unimproved hill pasture on a steep NNW facing slope on the south side of the valley. There were numerous linear and circular earthworks, caused according to the owner of the Castle by tree planting and felling after WWI. The land was tree covered on the First and Second OS maps. The topsoil was less than 5cm thick in this area and the subsoil was fragmented stone.

The NE trench was excavated through a ploughed field. The topsoil was 0.5m deep at the NE end of the trench and shallowed to 0.25m at the SW end of the field.

No archaeological finds or features were recorded and it is recommended that no further archaeological work is required during this work.



Illus 2 Site plan with excavated trenches (copyright Plans Ahead)



Illus 3 SW trench and turbine base showing shallow topsoil and rocky natural; facing NNW



Illus 4 NE trench with Castle of Fiddes in background; facing NE

4 REFERENCES

MacGibbon and Ross, D and T (1887-92) *The castellated and domestic architecture of Scotland from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries*, 5v Edinburgh Page(s): Vol. 2, 142-4.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Jim Welsh, Ampair for initiating this project and to Claire Herbert, Aberdeenshire Archaeology Service for her advice during the work.

APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo no	Description	Facing
DSC_5567-70	Track between NE and SW trenches	WSW
DSC_5571	SW trench	SW
DSC_5572-4	Earthworks in area around turbine base	S/SW
DSC_5575-8	turbine base (foreground) and SW trench	NE
DSC_5579-86	SW trench	NE
DSC_5587-95	NE trench	NE
DSC_5596-97	NE trench	SW
DSCF6983-85	Turbine base location	S/SW
DSCF6986-96	Digging SW trench	
DSCF6997-98	Digging NE trench	SW
DSCF6999-7002	SW trench location	

