



## **NEGATIVE WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

### **Sutton Bank Visitor Centre Thirsk North Yorkshire**

**NGR: SE 51687 83090**

**Contractor:** Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (Durham Office)

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**Client:** Northern Powergrid

**Planning Application Number:** n/a

**Scheduled Monument Consent Reference Number:** S00243474

**PCA Site Code:** SBT22

**Oasis ID:** preconst1-512761

#### **LOCATION**

**Planning Authority:** North Yorkshire County Council

**District:** Ryedale

**County:** North Yorkshire

**Site address:** Sutton Bank Visitor Centre, Thirsk, North Yorkshire

#### **DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:**

Archaeological work was required in association with the upgrade of the existing electricity supply to the North York Moors National Park visitor centre at Sutton Bank (Figure 1). The existing electricity supply was provided in a cable that traversed a section of the Cleave Dyke prehistoric monument (Scheduled Monument 1012745). The existing cable trench was carefully located and re-excavated and the replacement cable laid in the same trench alongside the existing, redundant cable.

As all groundworks were undertaken within the Scheduled Monument 'Section of the Cleave Dyke System, 45m East of the Visitors Centre at Sutton Bank' (Historic England List Entry No. 1012745), the works were archaeologically monitored as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC), on the advice of Keith Emerick, Ancient Monuments Inspector at Historic England (SMC Ref. S00243474) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation provided by PCA and agreed with Keith Emerick. The works involved monitoring one trench and the watching brief was commissioned by Northern Powergrid.

The cable trench was approximately 5m ENE/WSW by 0.3m wide and 0.7m + deep (Figure 2).

Any potential archaeological features relating to the Cleave Dyke System could therefore have been impacted upon. It was the aim of this scheme of work to mitigate potential impacts to the heritage resource.

#### **REASON FOR WATCHING BRIEF:**

The site was of archaeological interest because it lies within the Scheduled Monument of the Cleave Dyke (Historic England List Entry Number 1012745). The list entry for the monument is noted below:

#### ***Reasons for Designation***

*The Cleave Dyke system is the most westerly of a series of dyke systems on the Tabular Hills of north east Yorkshire. The name has been given to a series of linear ditches and banks stretching north-south over 9km parallel with and close to the western scarp of the Hambleton Hills. The system was constructed between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age to augment the natural division of the terrain by river valleys and watersheds. Significant stretches remain visible as upstanding earthworks; elsewhere it can be recognised as a cropmark on aerial photographs. The system formed a prehistoric territorial boundary in an area largely given over to pastoralism; the impressive scale of the earthworks displays the corporate prestige of their builders. In some instances the boundaries have remained in use to the present day. Linear boundaries are of considerable importance for the analysis of settlement and land use in the later prehistoric period; all well preserved examples will normally merit statutory protection.*

*Excavations at the northern part of this section of the Cleave Dyke system revealed two pits, 1.5m across which appeared to have been filled in recently. These are thought to be part of a pit alignment, a feature common to many sections of the Cleave Dyke system. These served as a marker for the alignment of the dyke and may in places have substituted for the dyke itself and served as territorial markers. This section of the Cleave Dyke system is preserved beneath a modern embankment. Significant remains are preserved which will retain important information about the original form and function of the earthwork. As part of a major boundary system the monument offers important scope for the study of the division of land for social, ritual and agricultural purposes in different geographical areas during the prehistoric period.*

#### ***Details***

*The monument includes a section of the Cleave Dyke system, a prehistoric linear boundary system on the Hambleton Hills. Orientated north to south, this section of the dyke extends for 245m, lying between a coniferous plantation and a modern road. The monument comprises a buried ditch, low bank and a pit alignment lying beneath a modern earth rampart. The line of the dyke is recorded as an earthwork on the OS map and the monument is known to have been an extant earthwork in 1976. The current upstanding earthwork is, in the most part, a relatively recent formation created during the construction of the car park and visitors' centre during the 1980's. Excavations undertaken in 1989 prior to the construction of the road revealed the presence of a ditch, recently infilled pits, and a low embankment following the line of the Cleave Dyke, preserved beneath the modern bank. Where revealed by excavation, the ditch is 2m wide and 0.5m deep. The full extent of flanking banks, where*

*exposed by excavation, could not be determined but it is considered that these are up to 5m wide and 0.75m high. Excavations at the northern end revealed two pits, 1.5m across, which appear to have been filled in recently. This continues the alignment of the dyke system at this end of the monument. The monument terminates at both ends at modern roads. The dyke continues beyond both these roads in a plantation, in which it is preserved as an earthwork. This monument is part of a wider system of prehistoric linear earthworks continuing for 9km north-south along the western edge of the Hambleton Hills. Shorter east-west earthworks linked valley heads to the main dyke and thus divided the terrain into discrete units for agricultural and social purposes. The dyke is associated with earlier round barrows which also marked the division of land. Together the monuments on this area of the Hambleton Hills provide important evidence of territorial organisation and the development of settled agricultural practices.*

The site has Scheduled Monument status, and thus has statutory protection under *The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*, any intrusive groundworks for the installation required SMC from DCMS prior to their undertaking. In accordance with the 1979 Act, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport consulted with Historic England before deciding whether or not to grant SMC after an application for the work was submitted by Northern Powergrid (Northeast) on 7th November 2022. Historic England considered ‘... *the effect of the proposed works upon the monument to be works potentially detrimental to the monument, but for which reasonable safeguards have been specified in the application for an appropriate level of archaeological supervision and recording*’

Accordingly, SMC was granted for the proposed works by the Secretary of State, advised by Historic England, subject to a series of conditions set out in a letter dated 24th November 2022. One of those conditions was for an archaeological watching brief to monitor the intrusive groundworks for remains relating to the Cleave Dyke system.

#### **DATES WORK UNDERTAKEN:**

Archaeological work was undertaken at the site on the following dates:

- Wednesday 06/01/2023

#### **RESULTS:**

*During the watching-brief, separate stratigraphic entities were assigned unique and individual ‘context’ numbers, which are indicated in the following text as, for example [123].*

Geological deposits were not exposed due to the limited depth of the trench and the fact that the works re-excavated an existing cable trench. The lowest deposit encountered comprised loose mid greyish yellow dolomite (103) that represented the primary backfill of the original cable trench. Overlying this was loose dark brownish grey silty gravel (102) that formed the upper fill of the original cable trench. At the western end of the trench was loose dark greyish brown silty clay mound (101) that represented modern material derived from the construction of the visitor centre and adjacent road. The uppermost deposit within the trench was friable dark brownish grey clayey silt topsoil (100) that was c. 0.5m thick.

No deposits or features of archaeological significance were encountered during the investigation.

**ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION:**

Figure 1- Site Location

Figure 2- Detailed Site Location

**ARCHIVE DEPOSITION:**

All documentation resulting from this project will be archived internally by PCA.

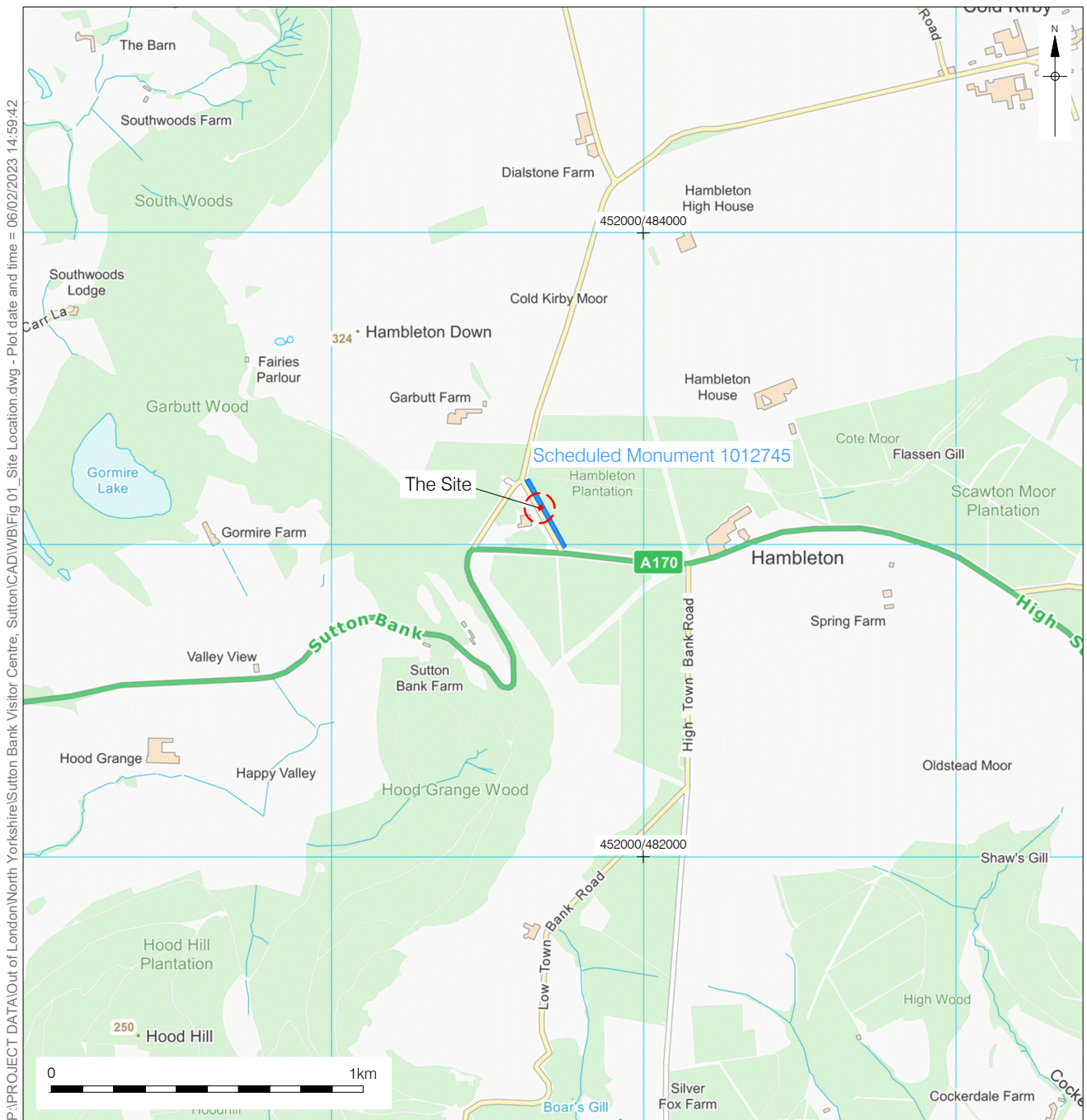
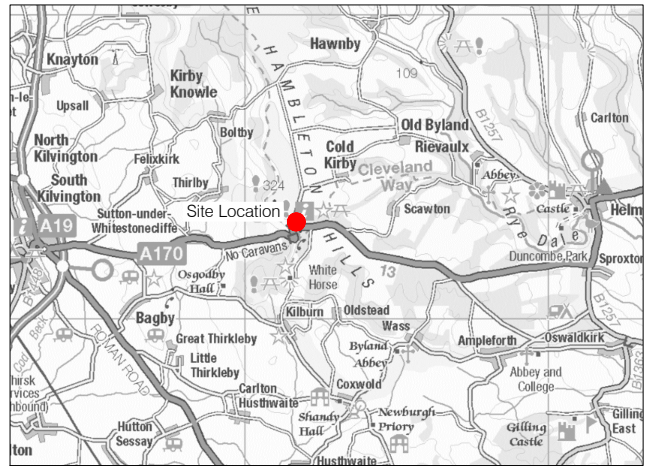
Fieldwork: Neal Lythe

Report: Scott Vance

Checked: Daniel Still

Authorised: Daniel Still

Date: 27/03/2023



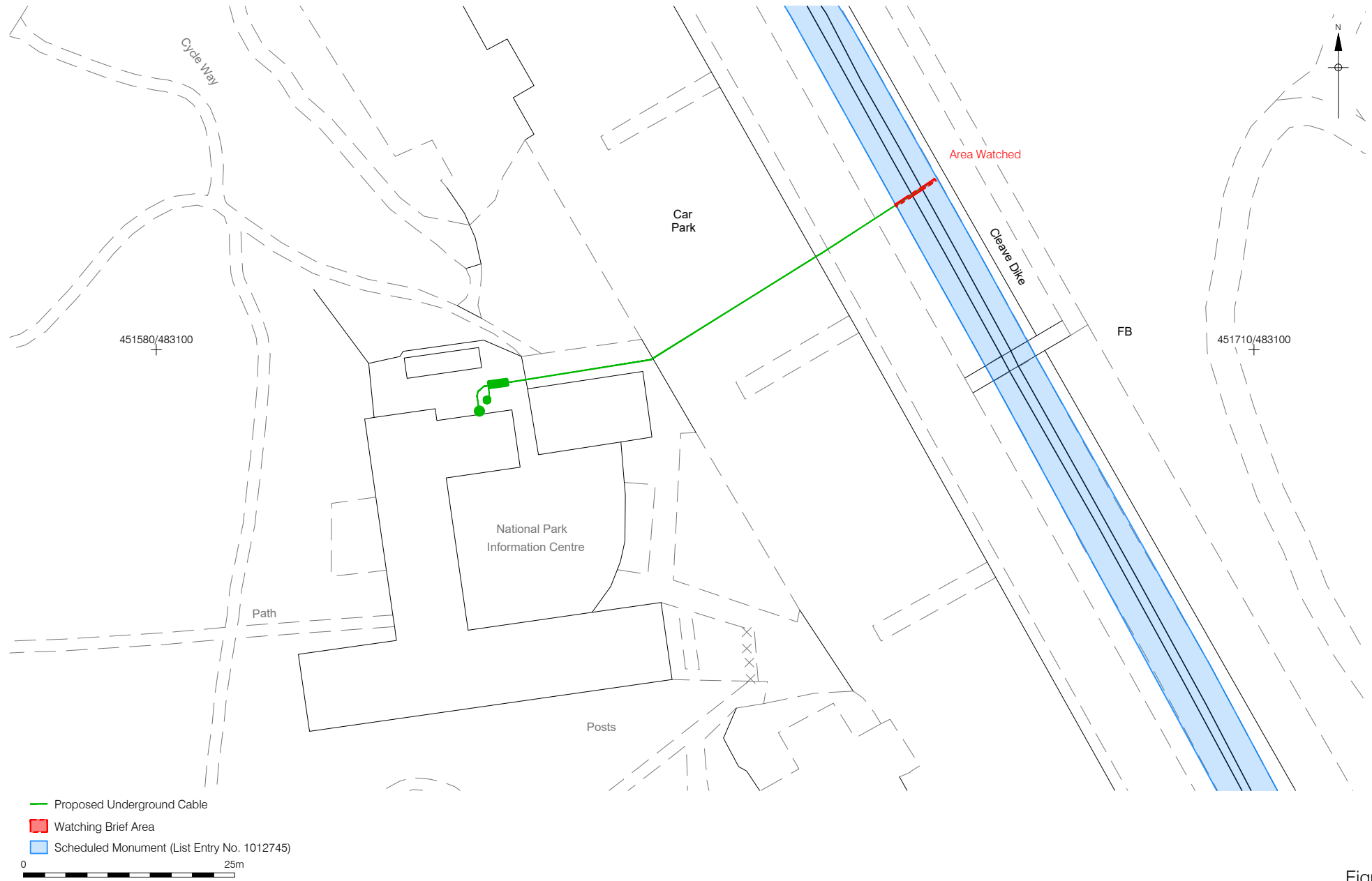


Figure 2  
Detailed Site Location showing Watching Brief Area and Scheduled Monument  
1:625 at A4

**PLATES:**



*Plate 1- Watching brief area, view NE. View north-east.*



*Plate 2- Watching brief area, view NE*



*Plate 3- Watching brief area, view SW.*