

CPAT Report No. 1324

Legacy to Oswestry 132kV Powerline

Archaeological Watching Brief



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CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Client name: Iberdrola

CPAT Project No: 1987

Project Name: Legacy to Oswestry 132kV Powerline

Grid Reference: SJ 29630 48594 to SJ 30310 30632

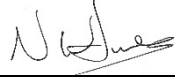
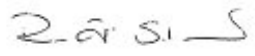
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Summary

The Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) has undertaken an archaeological watching brief during soil stripping along the underground sections of a new 132kV powerline between Legacy, near Rhosllanerchrugog in Wrexham and Oswestry in Shropshire.

Three separate watching briefs were carried out as part of the project, located at Oswestry, Legacy and Pentre Bychan. Both the Oswestry and Legacy watching briefs monitored topsoil removal along the line of a wayleave to accommodate the new underground powerline and adjacent haul road. At Pentre Bychan, the watching brief monitored the excavation of the cable trench through a section of modern road which crosses the line of Offa's Dyke.

The watching brief at Oswestry identified a number of features relating to the former Park Hall Army Camp located on the outskirts of the town, including a small sandstone building and a number of trackways. The top soil strip also revealed large areas of rubble which are likely to have occurred as a result of the demolition of the Park Hall Army Camp and the subsequent construction of the A5 Oswestry Bypass which ran parallel to and to the east of the Oswestry wayleave. A single, isolated pit was also exposed on the western edge of the Oswestry wayleave, dated to the 19th-20th century by pottery sherds within the fill. A number of ceramic land drains, a man hole and trenches for modern services were also exposed along the haul road.

The watching brief at Legacy identified an amorphous spread of burnt material for which there were no associated dateable finds. No further features of archaeological significance were identified.

The watching brief at Pentre Bychan has shown that no visible remains associated with Offa's Dyke were present beneath the modern road.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report describes the results of a watching brief conducted by the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) on behalf of Iberdrola Engineering and Construction during topsoil removal within a wayleave to accommodate a new underground 132kV powerline and adjacent haul road. The powerline is required as a reinforcement to the existing distribution network between Legacy, near Rhosllanerchrugog in Wrexham, and Oswestry in Shropshire and will consist of 20.6km of overhead line, carried on wooden poles, and 3km of underground connection (see Appendix 1), of which there are two sections.

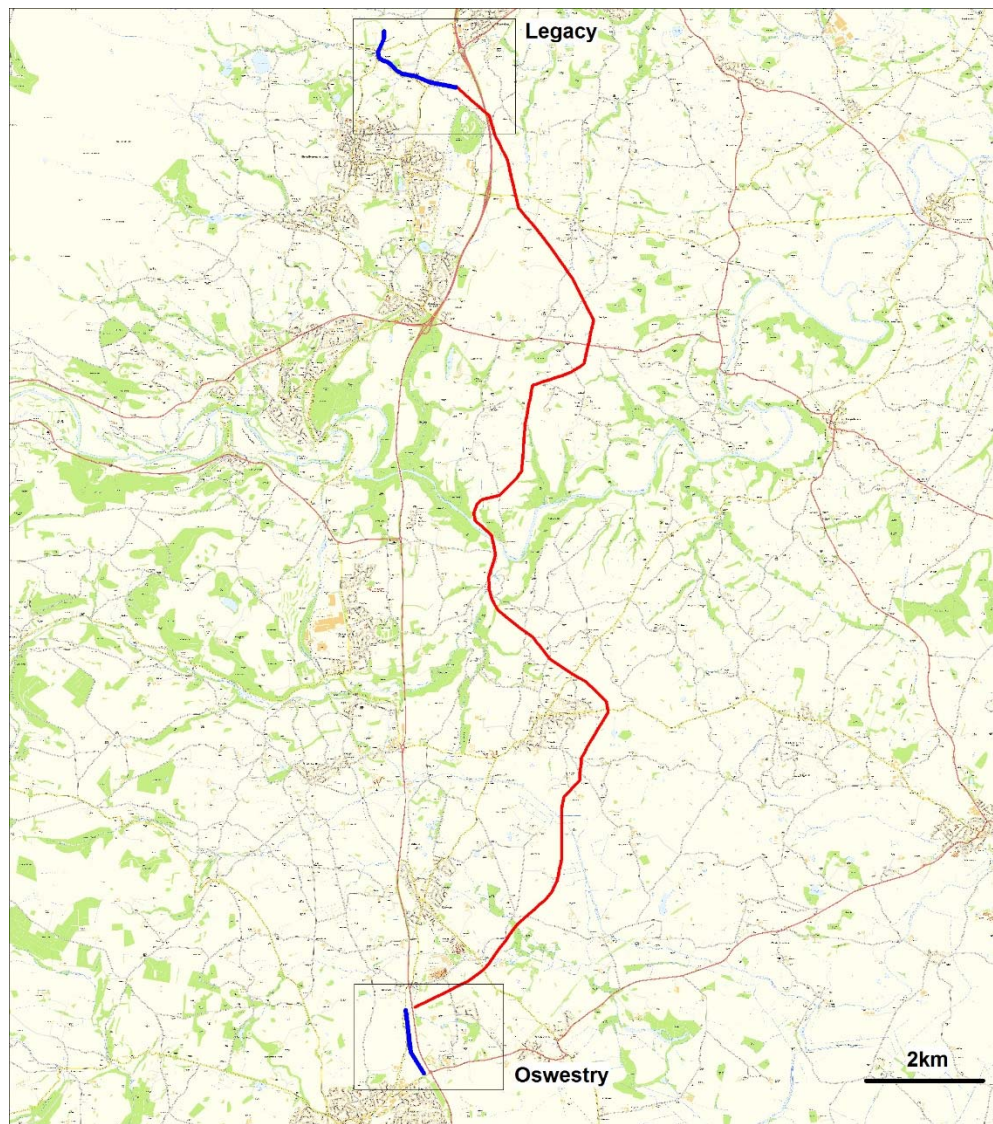


Figure 1. Location Map showing areas of the watching brief in blue.

- 1.2 An Environmental Statement was prepared in 2009, and updated in 2012, in support of the application for the powerline. The Environmental Statement included the results of a desk-based archaeological assessment and field survey carried out by Oxford Archaeology along the route of the proposed reinforcement. A total of 209 archaeological and cultural heritage features were identified within a 1km corridor,

comprising 19 Listed Buildings, 7 Scheduled Monuments (including three sections of Offa's Dyke and two of Wat's Dyke), one site that is both a Listed Building and a Scheduled Monument, and 182 undesignated sites. In the 100m corridor within which direct effects could potentially occur, there were two Scheduled Monuments, one listed building and five areas of undesignated sites were identified. One of these undesignated sites, a section of Wat's Dyke, has been identified as being of national importance.

- 1.3 The wayleave at Legacy extended across two fields between SJ 29630 48594 and SJ 29604 48285 and at Oswestry ran parallel to the A5 Oswestry Bypass, beginning at SJ 30310 30632 and terminating at SJ 30123 31755. Archaeological monitoring was carried out between the 8th and 23rd January 2015.
- 1.4 Additional monitoring was conducted between the 9th and 10th February to oversee the excavation of around 30m of the underground cable trench along a section of the B5426 at Pentre Bychan. The area observed extended between SJ 2999 4775 and SJ 2996 4774 at the point at which the cable route crossed the line of Offa's Dyke.



Figure 2. Shallow pit identified at Legacy © CPAT 3967-0003

2 Watching Brief: Legacy, Wrexham

- 2.1 The Legacy watching brief was conducted between the 9th and 21st January 2015. The wayleave measured 9m wide and extended across two fields located some 250m to the west of Offa's Dyke, beginning at a field gate at SJ 29604 48285 and crossing the two fields in a northerly direction before curving around to the west and terminating at SJ 29630 48594 alongside the Legacy sub-station. The natural ground surface sloped down from the southernmost field to the dividing field hedge, before rising again beyond the hedge to the north. At the time of the watching brief the southernmost field had been deep ploughed and the northern field was under pasture. An average of 0.35m of top-

soil was removed along the length of the wayleave onto a light yellowish brown silty-clay subsoil.

- 2.2 At SJ 29629 48351 at a depth of around 0.40m, an amorphous spread of burnt material was partially exposed during the watching brief. The visible remains measured 3m north to south by 2.20m east to west. A small slot excavated across the feature revealed a shallow pit measuring 1.04m across by 0.13m deep, with a lower fill of 90mm of heat-affected reddish clay, overlain by 0.04m of dark grey silty clay. No dating evidence was found associated with this feature.
- 2.3 No further archaeological features were identified along the line of the Legacy haul road.



Figure 3. Deposits in cable the trench at Pentre Bychan © CPAT 3967-0011

3 Watching Brief: Legacy, Offa's Dyke, Pentre Bychan, Wrexham

- 3.1 The watching brief of Offa's Dyke at Pentre Bychan was conducted between the 9th and 10th February 2015 to monitor the excavation of the underground cable trench routed along a section of the B5426 road. The cable route crossed between two scheduled sections of Offa's Dyke, although the point where the trench crossed the dyke was unscheduled. Around 30m of the cable trench excavation was monitored between SJ 2999 4775 and SJ 2996 4774.
- 3.2 The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.3m at the base of which a deposit of compacted black ash was encountered. This was relatively consistent across the whole of the trench, though in places over digging revealed a loose orangey brown sandy silt below with frequent fragments of sandstone.

- 3.3 Above the ash in the bottom of the trench was a deposit of yellow clay measuring 0.70m thick with 0.20m of crushed brick and 0.20m of ash/slag above this. The upper 0.17m (forming the surface of the road) comprised 0.05m of crushed stone with 0.12m of tarmac above. This sequence persisted for the length of the trench until the point at which the road curves to the north-west, crossing the bridge over the Pentrebychan Brook. Here the material exposed in the trench became much more disturbed and the deposits of brick rubble and coal ash became deeper, presumably as a result of the insertion of the road bridge.
- 3.4 No visible remains of Offa's Dyke or the associated ditches were observed during the watching brief. The deposits encountered revealed that the ground in this area had been entirely made up and incorporated industrial waste that presumably originated from one of the local colliery sites. It still however remains a possibility that remnants of the dyke ditch survive below the bottom of the excavated cable trench.

4 Watching Brief: Oswestry, Shropshire

- 4.1 The watching brief at Oswestry was conducted between the 8th and 23rd January 2015. The wayleave began at SJ 30310 30632 to the north of the B4580 and extended in a northerly direction across pasture fields to the west of the A5 Oswestry Bypass, before terminating at SJ 30123 31755. On average between 0.30m and 0.45m of top soil was removed along its length and the exposed subsoil was of variable appearance, alternating between a light, yellowish/orange clayey silt and gravelly clay silt.



Figure 4. 19th to 20th-century pit CPAT © 3958-0072

- 4.2 At SJ 30278 30921 an irregularly shaped pit was partially exposed along the western edge of the wayleave measuring 1.1m wide by 1.4m long and 0.18m deep. A quarter section was excavated through the pit, which was filled by a brown silty clay containing occasional blue and white sherds of china of 19th or 20th-century date.
- 4.3 The Oswestry wayleave crossed an area of land that was formerly associated with Park Hall, a timber-framed building located some 400m to the east and built at the end of the 16th century by Robert Powell. At the outbreak of the First World War the hall was handed over to the military for local headquarters and an army camp was constructed in the grounds in 1915. The hall itself was destroyed by fire on Boxing Day 1918 but the camp continued to be used for many years until its final closure in 1975. Much of the land reverted to farmland though the sports facilities of the camp were retained, and are still used today.
- 4.4 From SJ 30220 31100 and extending up to the northern end of the wayleave, there was notable disturbance to the subsoil which appeared in patches amongst large areas of 20th-century rubble that included fragments of red brick, asbestos and concrete. The rubble deposits were primarily concentrated along the eastern edge of the wayleave, representing disturbance that is likely to relate to both the demolition of the Park Hall Army Camp and the construction of the adjacent A5, Oswestry bypass.



Figure 5. Aerial photograph of 1964 showing Park Hall Army Camp. The wayleave route is marked in red. (<http://www.42regt.com/park%20hall%20ocamp/page1.html>)

- 4.5 Between SJ 30250 31000 and SJ 30190 31290 the wayleave crossed an area that had formerly been occupied by buildings associated with the Park Hall Army Camp (see Figure 5 above). The field at this location was notably flat and appeared to have been deliberately levelled with the top soil in this area being no thicker than 0.25m. The subsoil at this location appeared intermittently amongst large areas of gravely rubble including fragments of red brick and concrete.
- 4.6 A number of ceramic land drains were observed running in a north-west to south-east direction at SJ 30215 31122, SJ30210 31143 and SJ 30209 31137; and at SJ 30189 31184 a red brick man-hole was exposed measuring 118m by 136m. A linear feature measuring 0.40m wide is cut through modern deposits running north to south between SJ 30119 31764 and SJ 30131 31629 and is likely to be a modern service trench.
- 4.7 At SJ 30206 31156, an iron pipe aligned north-west to south-east extended across the wayleave. This measured 80mm in diameter.

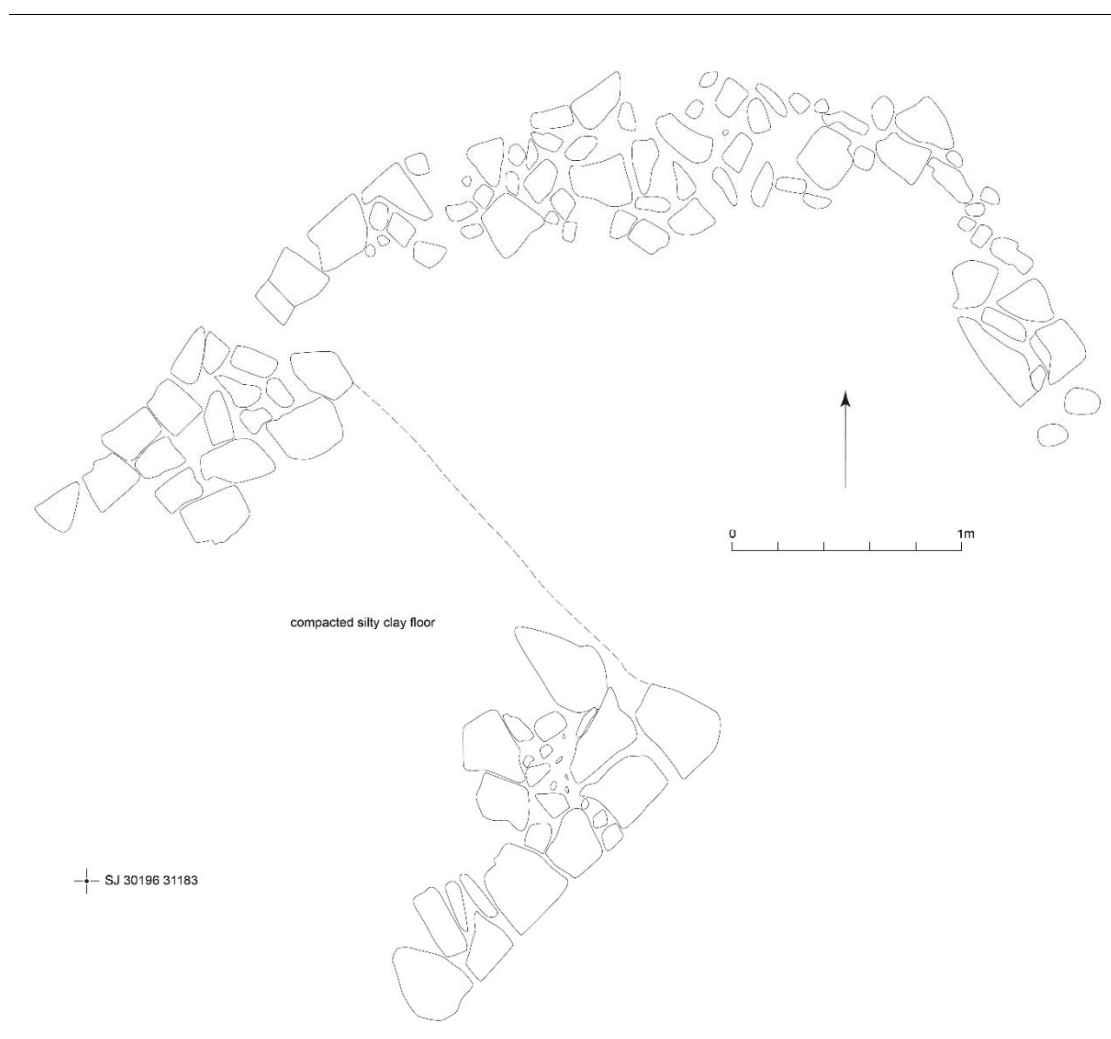


Figure 6. Plan of the sandstone building © CPAT

- 4.8 At SJ 30196 31183 the foundations of a small sandstone building measuring 4.10m long by 2.90m wide was exposed comprising a single course of dry-stone walling, 0.45m thick and constructed from stones around 0.40m in diameter (Figure 6 and 7). The stones were faced on the outer edge and formed a D-shaped building in plan, with two walls

aligned north-east to south-west, that to the north-west curving around to the south at its eastern end. In the western half of the building, the subsoil was compacted, possibly indicating a floor surface.

- 4.9 Aerial photographs and earlier maps show that the building falls within an area formerly occupied by the Park Hall Army Camp and may represent the remains of one of the former camp buildings.



Figure 7. Sandstone building foundation viewed from the north-east © CPAT 3958-0088

- 4.10 Beyond the sandstone building to the north at SJ 30179 31284, the wayleave crossed a field bank and an adjacent track on a north-east to south-west alignment. The field boundary bank contained modern gravels, crushed stone and measured 5m wide and 0.5m high. The trackway was situated to the immediate north of the bank, measuring 5m across and was of red brick and sandstone rubble. The track was marked on the 1875 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map running from the south-east to the north-west before curving around to the east to the house at Park Hall.
- 4.11 A modern gravel track was partially revealed between SJ 30157 31442 and SJ 30162 31483 (see Figure 8 above) which appeared to form part of a grid layout on a north-east to south-west alignment with two parallel spurs extending towards the north-west. There are no buildings marked at this location on any of the earlier Ordnance Survey maps, but the tracks followed the axis of the main Park Hall Army Camp which was sited some 170m to the south. They may therefore have been associated with temporary structures radiating from the main camp. Areas of ash, charcoal and sherds of white china were recovered in the vicinity.



Figure 8. Trackway viewed from the south © CPAT 3958-0076

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The watching brief at Oswestry, Shropshire, has identified a number of features relating to the former Park Hall and Park Hall Army Camp located to the north-west of the town. Map regression reveals that the trackway exposed at SJ 30179 31284 was marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1875 and was associated with Park Hall prior to its conversion to an Army Camp. The small sandstone building exposed at SJ 30196 31183 would have been sited within the confines of the main army camp and the grid patterned trackways to the north of this followed the axis of the main camp and are likely to have been associated.
- 5.2 The Oswestry watching brief also revealed large areas of 20th-century rubble which are likely to have resulted from the combined demolition of the Park Hall Army Camp and the subsequent construction of the A5 Oswestry Bypass which may have been undertaken as a single event. A single pit of 19th or 20th-century date was also exposed during the watching brief as well as a number of ceramic land drains, a brick man-hole and trenches for modern services.
- 5.3 The Legacy, Wrexham, watching brief identified an amorphous spread of burnt material, filling a shallow pit. No dateable finds were found associated with this feature and no other significant archaeological features were exposed as part of the Legacy watching brief.
- 5.4 At Pentre Bychan, Wrexham, the watching brief demonstrated that there is at least 1.3m of made up ground beneath the modern B5426. No visible remains of Offa's Dyke were exposed within the cable trench, though it is possible that remnants of the ditch could still survive beneath the excavated limit of the cable trench.

6 Acknowledgements

- 6.1 Thanks are due to Matt Gibson and Claire Davies of Iberdrola and the machine operatives and banksmen of DXI Civil Engineering.

7 References

7.1 Cartographic Sources

1875 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2,500 map. Shropshire

7.2 Internet Sources

<http://www.42regt.com/park%20hall%20ocamp/page1.html>



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Figure 9. Oswestry plan showing heritage assets identified by the watching brief

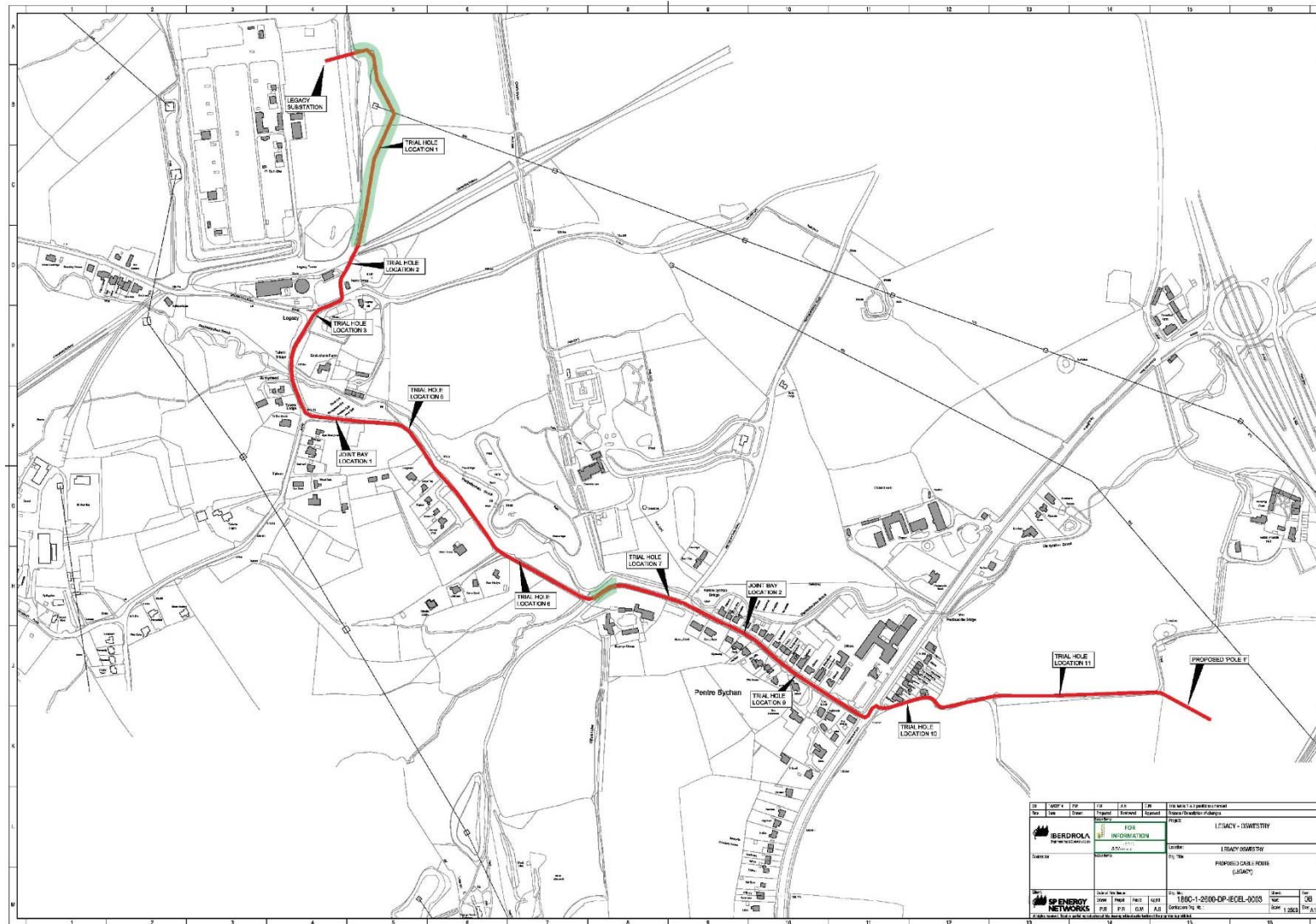


Figure 11. Legacy underground cable route. Areas of the watching brief are marked in green

Appendix 1: Watching brief attendance record

Date	Archaeological monitoring undertaken at Legacy by:	Archaeological monitoring undertaken at Oswestry by:
8-Jan-2015		Sophie Watson
9-Jan-2015	Richard Hankinson	Sophie Watson
10-Jan-2015		Menna Bell
11-Jan-2015		Menna Bell
12-Jan-2015	Sophie Watson	Menna Bell
13-Jan-2015	Sophie Watson	Menna Bell
14-Jan-2015	Sophie Watson	Kate Pitt
15-Jan-2015		Kate Pitt & Sophie Watson
16-Jan-2015		Kate Pitt & Sophie Watson
19-Jan-2015	Sophie Watson	Kate Pitt
20-Jan-2015	Sophie Watson	Kate Pitt
21-Jan-2015	Sophie Watson	Kate Pitt
22-Jan-2015		Menna Bell
23-Jan-2015		Menna Bell
2-Feb-2015	Sophie Watson – aborted visit	
9-Feb-2015	Sophie Watson	
10-Feb-2015	Sophie Watson	