Archaeological Watching Brief for Reedbed Creation Scheme

at Potter Heigham, Norfolk

Heather Wallis August 2013 HW Report No. 129 Project name Reedbed Creation, Potter Heigham

Client Norfolk Wildlife Trust

NHER Event No ENF 130814

Grid reference TG 4350 1950 (centre)

Date of fieldwork 8th May to 28th June 2013

Introduction

The Norfolk Wildlife Trust applied for planning permission to create an area of reedbed in the Parish of Potter Heigham (Figs 1 and 2). The site lay on the north bank of the River Thurne and is bounded on it's eastern edge by Candle Dyke. The proposed works consists of the excavation of a relatively shallow (c.1m deep) dyke and low bund around the perimeter of the new reedbed. Planning permission has been granted with a condition that archaeological monitoring of the works is undertaken.

Geology and topography

The site was low lying (0 to1m OD) and flat marsh. The underlying geology is of the Crag Group formation overlain by Breydon formation clay and silts (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html).

Historical Background

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) shows that one historic site lay within the area of the reedbed. This site (NHER 45086) has been identified through aerial photography and consists of probable causeways and drains of post-medieval date. Three other sites are recorded nearby, but outside the area of works. To the south-west is a post-medieval/modern drainage pump (NHER 8545), to the north a possible ring ditch of unknown date (NHER 45085) and to the east is an eel sett. Recently major flood defence works along the banks of the River Thurne and Candle dyke have been completed and a new IDB drain dug to the north of the site. Both of these works were subject to an archaeological watching brief (HNER refs ENF126447 and ENF126448 respectively), but neither revealed significant archaeological deposits.

The Reedbed Creation

In order to create an area suitable for reedbed a low perimeter was created around the site, isolating the area from the surrounding marshes. Material for the band was sourced from the excavation of a broad shallow dyke, c.11m wide and 1m deep, running around the site on the inner side of the bund.

Archaeological Methods

Monitoring visits were made to the site on a regular basis. Five visits were made during the 7 week development period. On these visits the areas of topsoil strip were searched for any obvious archaeological features or finds. Metal detecting was carried out where conditions were suitable. The sides and base of the newly cut dyke were observed and any possible features or significant changes in the soils noted.

Results

No finds or features were noted during these works. Particular attention was paid to area where the new dyke crossed the known site of ditches identified from aerial photographs, but no features were evident in the sides of the newly cut dyke.

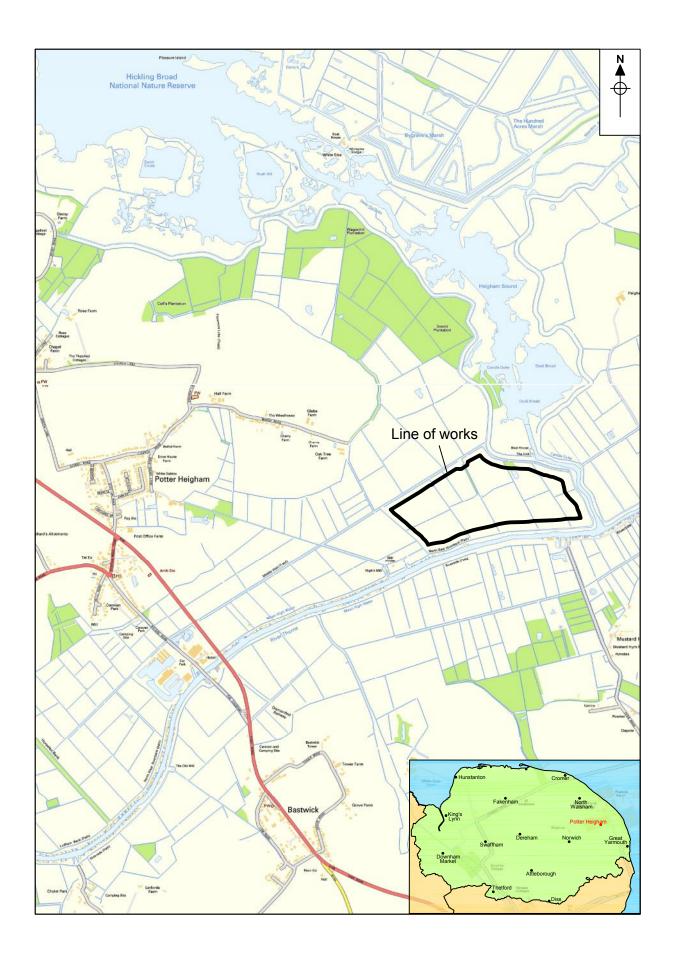
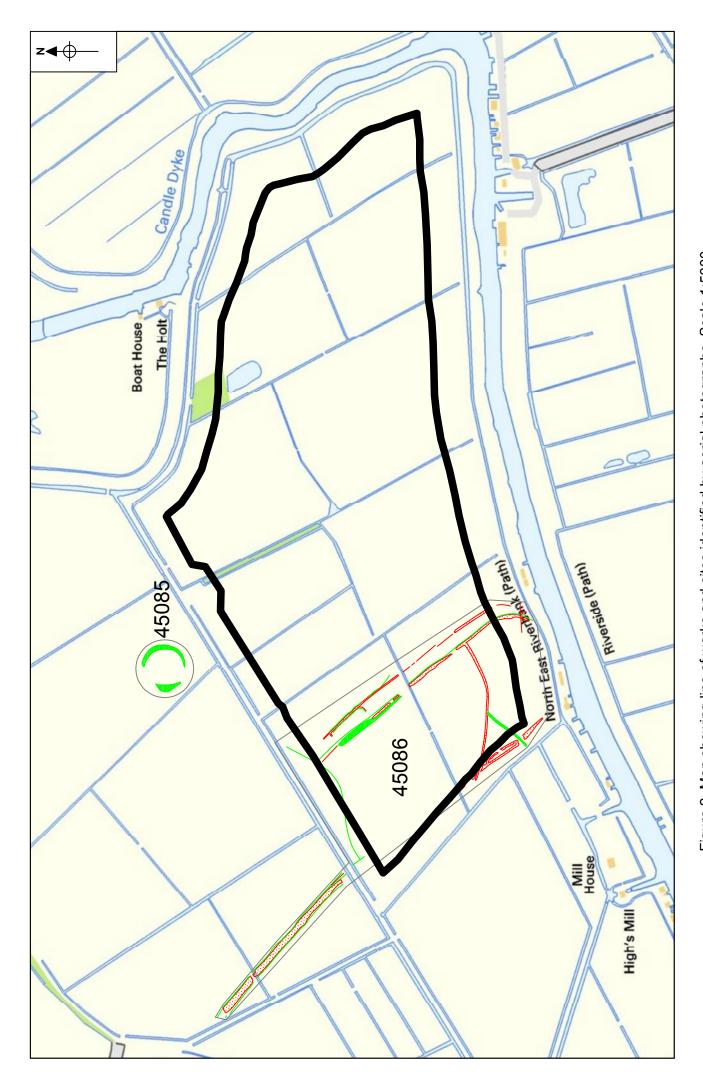


Figure 1. Site location map. Scale 1:20000.



Aerial photograph plot data by National Mapping Programme copyright English Heritage and Norfolk Historic Environment Service Figure 2. Map showing line of works and sites identified by aerial photographs. Scale 1:5000.