

Watch

August 2010



New Manufacturing Facility, Machrihanish: Watching Brief Report

On Behalf of: Rok Ltd,
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Millburn Road,
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National Grid Reference (NGR): NR 6610 2300

AOC Project No: 21459

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This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Abstract

This report represents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group for Rok Prime Contracting on a new manufacturing facility at Machrihanish, Argyll & Bute. The scope of the works was determined by Argyll and Bute Council as advised by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS), in keeping with the policies outlined in SPP (2010) and PAN 42 (1994).

The removal of wind-blown sands and peat deposits, up to two metres in depth, across site revealed neither significant archaeological features nor artefactual material. No further works are recommended.

0 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 0.1 An archaeological Watching Brief was required Rok Prime Contracting at a new manufacturing facility at Machrihanish, Argyll & Bute. The work was required in response to a planning condition set by Argyll & Bute Council, who are advised on archaeological matters by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS). The work was required in accordance with SPP23 (SOEnd 2008) and PAN 42 (SOEnd 1994). Argyll & Bute Council recommended a Watching Brief on groundworks associated with the new facility in safeguarding the archaeological resource from any adverse physical impacts deriving from associated construction activities. This work was carried out with full regard for the WoSAS Standard Conditions for archaeological fieldwork (Appendix 28).
- 0.2 The watching brief observed extensive peat deposits directly overlying natural subsoil over the vast majority of the site. This in turn was overlain by deposits of wind-blown sand. Evidence of former ground surfaces were recorded in the south-west of the site. Neither significant archaeological features nor artefactual material were unearthed by the watching brief. No further works are recommended.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological Watching Brief was required Rok Prime Contracting at a new manufacturing facility at Machrihanish, Argyll & Bute. The project involved monitoring all ground breaking works associated with the construction of the new facility.

1.2 Curatorial control

- 1.2.1 This programme of works was designed to fully satisfy the requirements of Argyll and Bute Council, as advised on archaeological matters by WoSAS. A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (AOC 2009) approved by WoSAS, prior to the start of on-site works, outlined the entirety of the archaeological programme of work which may have been needed to mitigate the effects of the proposed development.

1.3 Archaeological Background

- 1.3.1 Although there were are no known archaeological sites within the development area, *Clochkeil* crannog (NMRS NR62SE; NGR: NR 6772 2375) lies to the NNW. The local area has also yielded several artefacts, predominately during 19th or early 20th century land improvement. These include:

Two stone axes (NMRS NR62SE 202) found near Darlochan Moss

A Middle Bronze Age spearhead (NMRS NR62SE 23) found near Aros Moss

A flint leaf-shaped arrowhead and alleged stone 'hatchet or battle-axe' (NMRS NR62SE 4) found on Aros Moss.

The Parkfergus log-boat (NMRS NR62SE 3) found on the southern side of Machrihanish airfield.

- 1.3.2 The immediately adjacent Machrihanish Airfield (WoSAS Site ID 19073) started as a sub-station of the airship airbase at Luce Bay. It closed in 1918 to be re-built at the beginning of World War II (as RNAS Strabane) again becoming disused until all flying ceased in 1953. It later became a NATO base in 1960-62, and also acted as US Navy weapons base and diversion airfield. It was later given over to civil use.
- 1.3.3 Due to both historic land improvement and 20th century development the original topography of the area was poorly understood. Most of the significant archaeological finds appear to have occurred during the drainage of lochans and peat mosses which once, together with raised sandy knolls, constituted the immediate landscape (McBrien pers com). Landscaping for the airfield and other local 20th century development was thought likely to have compromised the archaeological potential of the area without completely eradicating the possibility old ground surfaces, and possibly associated archaeological material, still existing as intermittent islands of survival within the sandy knolls, or deeply buried below windblown sands or recent landscape levelling backfill.

2 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objectives of the archaeological watching brief are:
- i) to safeguard the archaeological resource that may be disturbed by the proposed development works;
 - ii) to identify and record the presence of former landscape elements, primarily buried ground surfaces
 - iii) to liaise with WoSAS and the client in the event of significant archaeological features and /or small finds being unearthed as to the most appropriate response in safeguarding these features either by preservation *in situ*, if at all feasible, or by archaeological recording.

3 METHOD

- 3.1 The development proposals comprised a differential physical impact across the development area and this, together with prior 20th development in some locations, required the watching brief to focus on specific areas. The ground impacts are set out in Figure 1.
- 3.2 The greatest disturbance occurred in Area B (Pink) and Area C (Blue). The watching brief in Area B ceased when either natural subsoil was reached or there was extensive modern disturbance in the specific locations. The watching brief in Area C ceased when either natural subsoil was reached, or there was extensive modern disturbance or the formation levels have been obtained. The watching brief in Area A (Green), where ground penetration was likely to be slightest but would occur over a wide area, ceased when excavation reached either natural subsoil or formation levels.
- 3.3 All excavations were undertaken by an excavator utilising a bladed ditching bucket operating under the constant monitoring of an experienced field archaeologist.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Watching Brief was carried out intermittently under cold and wet weather conditions between 21st September 2009 and 26th January 2010. The weather conditions and use of a ditching bucket rendered good archaeological visibility.

4.1.2 The various data gathered from the excavation are presented as a series of appendices:

Appendix 1 contains the photographic register;

Appendix 2 reproduces the '*Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*' entry.

4.2 Overview

4.2.1 The watching brief focused on the monitoring of topsoil/overburden stripping within Areas A, B and C (Figure 1). All of the monitored areas had been disturbed by previous groundbreaking works, including ground leveling, drainage and the excavation of service trenches.

4.2.2 Area A (Plate 1) was covered in a combination of tarmac areas and grass covered topsoil. The topsoil consisted of a sandy silt up to 0.35 m in depth, which overlay windblown sand up to 0.30 m in depth. Deposits of peat were observed at the formation level of 0.60 m below the existing ground surface across the central and northern parts of the area. The excavation of the Haul Road across the north of the area from Area B (Figure 1) revealed the peat to be a maximum of two metres in depth and overlying a natural subsoil of fine grey sand. The excavation of the south-west corner of the area revealed a thin buried top-soil (0.05 m in depth) directly underlying the existing top-soil. This deposit appeared darker and would seem to represent a buried turf. The buried soil in turn overlaid a deposit of wind-blown sand (0.20 m in depth).

4.2.3 The works within Area B (Plate 2) consisted of the re-routing of an existing burn and the creation of a Haul Road linking the development areas with the existing access road. The Haul Road was six metres in width and ran across the northern end of the site area. The excavation of the road necessitated the removal of the existing topsoil, wind blown sand and peat deposits down to a maximum depth of approximately two metres. The peat in this area ranged from 0.40 m in the north-east corner to around 1.40 m in the north-west, and contained well preserved former root systems and other tree remains. Sharp, regular undulations in the peat were visible to the south of the area bordering Area C. These possibly illustrate 19th century attempts at drainage.



Plate 1: Area A formation level showing underlying peat deposits

4.2.4

Area C (Plate 3). This area was split into northern and southern parts respectively. The northern part (the area for the foundations for a new build) ran parallel to the existing tower building. The stripping of this area again revealed numerous modern drains and other services dug through the deposits of wind-blown sand. These ran both north to south and east to west and drained the area into the existing burn/drainage ditch. Local information revealed that there were numerous pre-existing buildings related to the initial air-port development in this area. The excavation of Area C revealed 1.2 metres of fibrous peat overlying a fine grey sand. The depths of the overlying wind-blown sand and top-soil were the same as in Area A. The southern part of Area A was excavated to the formation level of Area A (0.60 m) only, due to a change in development plans.



Plate 2: Stripping of deposits within Area B (Haul Road)



Plate 3: Peat & wind-blown sand showing sharp undulations caused by 19th century drainage (Area C).

5 CONCLUSION

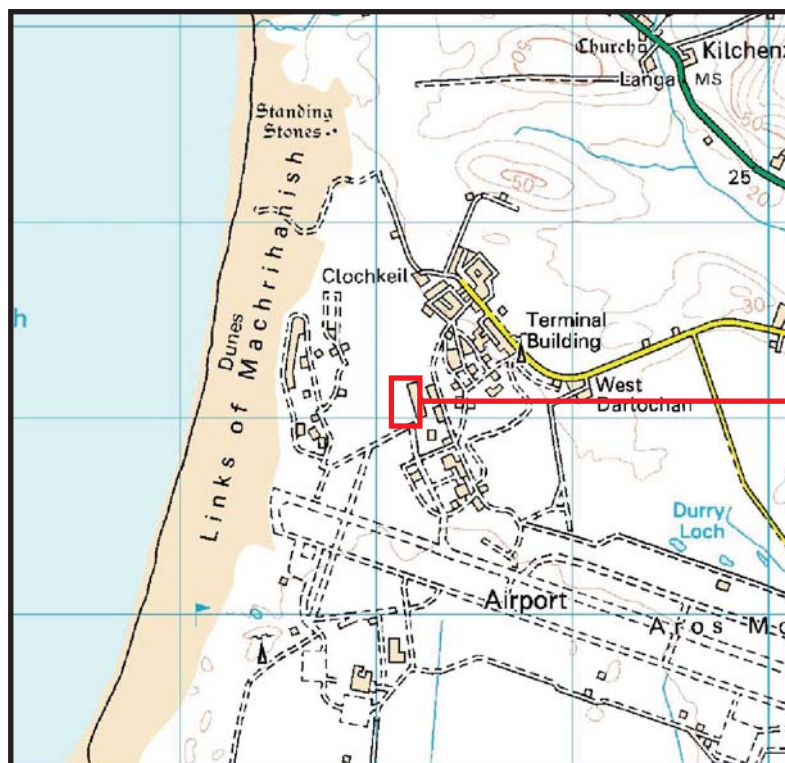
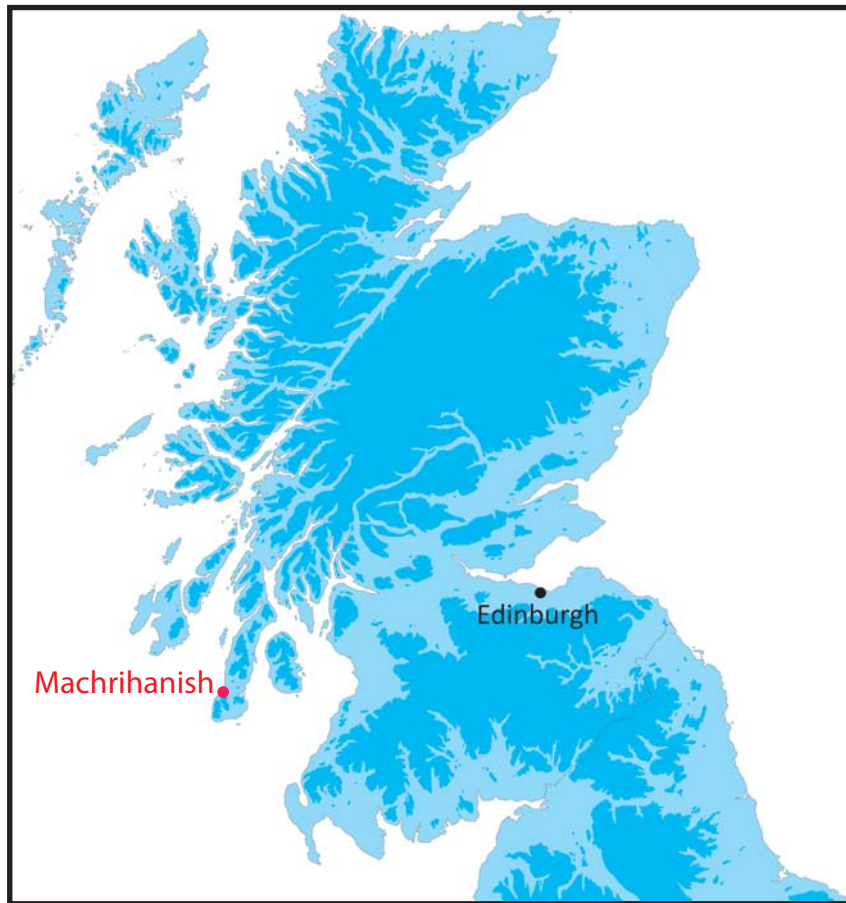
- 5.1 Though no significant archaeological deposits, features or small finds were encountered during the watching brief, the works did provide evidence for the changes undergone within the landscape of the immediate locale. It would appear that the former landscape of knolls of wind-blown sand, interspersed with pockets of peat, was truncated during the creation of the air-port thereby sealing peat deposits under a layer of sand 0.20 m – 0.30 m in depth. This in turn was overlain by an imported topsoil. The peat itself would appear to reach a maximum depth of 1.40 m along the northern part of the site, fading to 0.40 m within the southern end of Area C.
- 5.2 No further archaeological works are recommended. This recommendation will require ratification by WoSAS on behalf of Argyll and Bute Council.

6 REFERENCES

AOC 2009 Watching Brief at new manufacturing facility at Machrihanish, Argyll and Bute: *Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation*, Unpubl AOC Archaeology Client Report

Scottish Government 2010 *Scottish Planning Policy* (February 2010).

The Scottish Office Environment Department 1994 *Planning Advice Note 42. Archaeology – the Planning Process and Scheduled Ancient Monument Procedures*. January 1994.



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Figure 1: Location of the site at Machrihanish

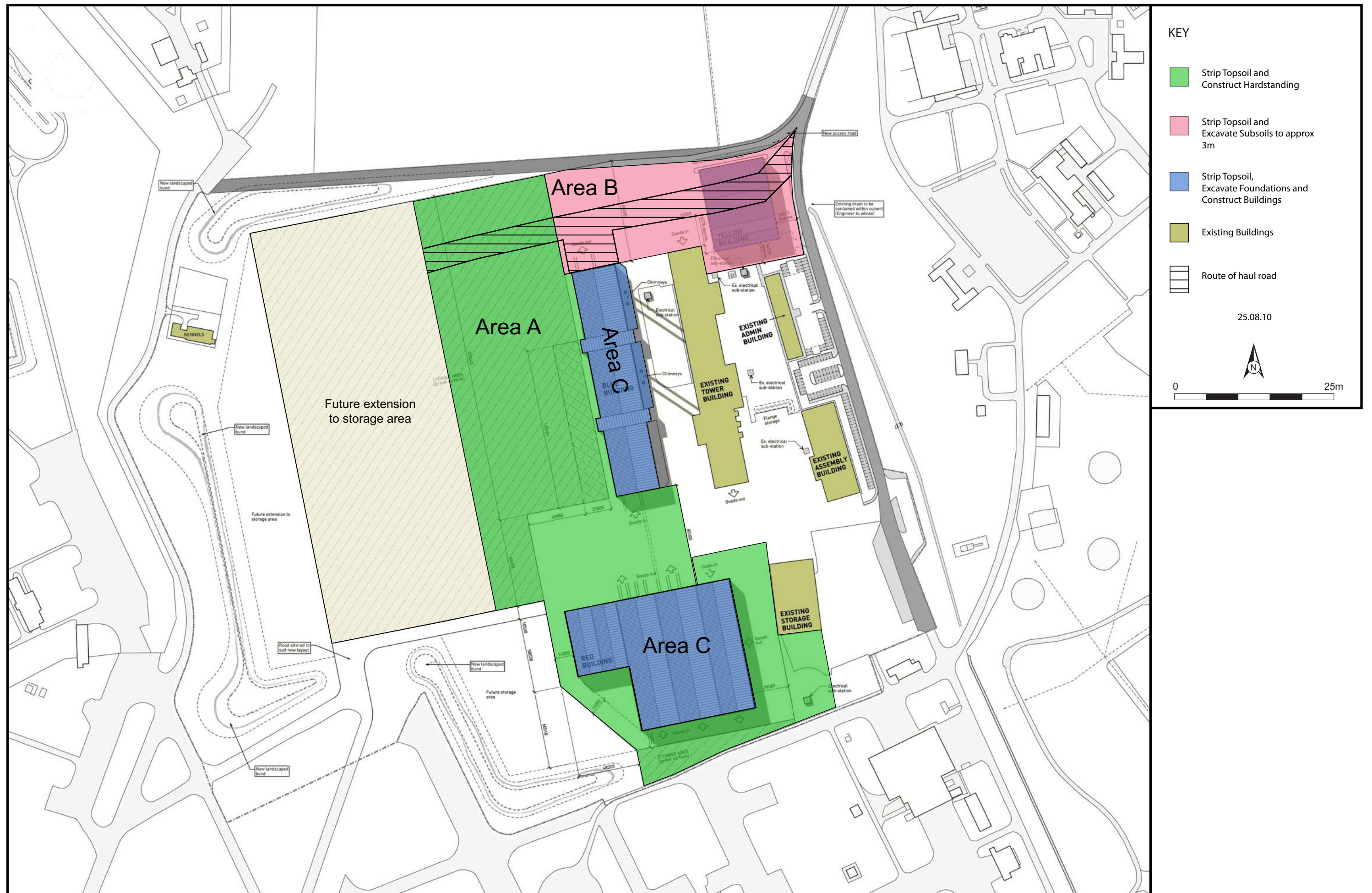


Figure 2: Watching Brief Areas

New Manufacturing Facility, Machrihanish, Argyll and Bute: Watching Brief Report

Section 2: Appendices

APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER

Film 1 Black and White Print, Colour slide and Digital

Frame	Description	From
1	Registration	
2-3	Working shot during removal of bunds	S
4	Pre-ex shot of road, Area B	W
5	Post-ex shot, Area B	N
6-7	North facing section through service trench	N
8	Working shot during stripping, Area A	W
9	Working shot, Area A	N
10	Working shot during excavation, Area B	N
11	Working shot, Area B	NW
12	Working shot, Area B	NW
13	Shot of service excavation, area B	W
14	Road excavation, Area B	E
15-16	Working shot during stripping, Area A/C	N
17-18	Working shot during bund removal, Area B	W
19-20	Working shot during stripping, Area B	E
21-22	Detail of curvilinear feature, Area A/C	S
23-24	W-facing section through curvilinear feature, Area A/C	W
25	East facing section through deposits to formation level	E
26	Detail of modern drainage features	N
27	Pre-ex shot of area south of strip, Area A/C	E
28	Pre-ex shot of area north-west of strip, Area A/C	E
29	Shot of service junction, Area A/C	S
30	Working shot of new haul road, Area B	SE
31	East facing section of new haul road, Area B	SE
32	Detail of northern end of strip area, Area A/A	S
33	Working shot of new area to south, Area A/C	N

Film 2 Black and White Print, Colour slide and Digital

Frame	Description	From
0-2	Detail of west end of haul road, peat deposit, Area B	S
3-4	Detail of west end of haul road, peat deposit, Area B	SW
5	Detail of north end of post-strip, Area A/C	S
6	Detail of south end of post strip, Area A/C	N
7	Detail of north facing section through haul road, Area B	NE
8	North facing section through haul road, Area B	N
9	Working shot of haul road, Area B	W
10	North facing section through haul road, Area B	N
11	Working shot of haul road, Area B	NW
12-13	Registration shot	

Film 3 Black and White Print, Colour slide and Digital

Frame	Description	From
1	Detail of peat stripping for access road, Area B	S
2	Detail of peat stripping for access road, Area B	S
3	Working shot during road extension showing peat exposure, Area B	N
4	Working shot during road extension showing peat exposure, Area B	S
5	Working shot of peat removal from road, Area B	S
6	North facing section through excavation area, Area B	N
7	Working shot, Area B	W
8	Working shot, Area B	W
9	Detail of access road, Area B	E
10	Detail of 19 th century drainage, Area B	SE
11	Detail of 19 th century drainage, Area B	E
12-13	East facing section through peat cutting, Area B	E
14	Detail of peat removal, Area B	SE
15	Detail of peat removal, Area B	SE
16	East facing section through modern drainage, Area B	SE
17-18	East facing section through modern drainage, Area B	SE
19	East facing section through modern drainage, Area B	S
20-21	Detail of turf stripping, Area A	S
22-23	Detail of turf stripping, Area A	S

APPENDIX 2: DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND REPORT

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Argyll & Bute Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	New Manufacturing Facility at Machrihanish, Campbeltown, Argyll : Watching Brief
PROJECT CODE:	21459
PARISH:	Campbeltown
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Rob Engl
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	AOC Archaeology Group
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NR 6610 2300
START DATE (this season)	21 st September 2009
END DATE (this season)	26 th January 2010
PREVIOUS WORK (inc DES)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>An archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken on a new manufacturing facility at Machrihanish, Argyll & Bute.</p> <p>The removal of wind-blown sands and peat deposits of up to two metres in depth across site revealed neither significant archaeological features nor artefactual material.</p>
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ARCHIVE LOCATION	Archive to be deposited in NMRS



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