

ABBAY HOUSE HOTEL, ABBAY ROAD, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, CUMBRIA

Archaeological Watching Brief



Client:
Catford and Longford

NGR: 361548 476015

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Non-Technical Summary

As part of a scheme to provide new signage within the grounds of the Abbey House Hotel an archaeological watching brief was carried out in order to monitor the associated excavation that took place. Three signs were modified, two of which were within the Scheduled Monument area for Furness Abbey, for which Scheduled Monument consent was obtained, although these did not involve any below-ground excavation. With the agreement of the client, the excavation work associated with the sign outside of the Scheduled Monument was monitored despite not being a requirement of the planning condition or consent.

The Abbey House Hotel lies within the precinct of Furness Abbey. The abbey was established on this site in 1127, while the Abbey House Hotel was built in 1913-1914 for the use of Vickers to entertain guests.

The watching brief monitored the excavation by hand of a pair of new postholes for one of the new signs. The postholes were excavated in areas that have been disturbed by tree roots and pre-existing signage, and no archaeological finds or features were observed.

Acknowledgements

Greenlane Archaeology would like to thank Catford and Longford for commissioning the project, and Tim Kilroe at Bethell for providing information and liaison. Further thanks are due to the staff of Bolton Sign for their assistance on site. Additional thanks are due to Andrew Davison, Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Peter McCrone, and Stephen Boyle, all at English Heritage, for their comments on the project and help with the Scheduled Monument Consent.

The watching brief was carried out by Ric Buckle, who also compiled this report with Dan Elsworth. The illustrations were produced by Tom Mace. The project was managed by Dan Elsworth and the report was edited by Jo Dawson.

1. Introduction

1.1 Circumstances of the Project

1.1.1 Following the submission of a planning application (Ref. B22/2014/0109) for the erection of a series of new signs at the Abbey House Hotel, Abbey Road, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria (NGR 361548 476015), an application for Scheduled Monument Consent was made by Greenlane Archaeology on behalf of Catford and Longford (hereafter 'the client'). The majority of the Abbey House Hotel and its grounds are within the Schedule Monument area for Furness Abbey (no. 13572), although only two of the proposed signs were. However, as they represented changes to the fabric and setting of the monument consent was applied for, however, they did not require any below-ground excavation and so no archaeological monitoring was necessary. However, it was agreed with the client that the work relating to the sign outside the Scheduled Monument, which required the excavation of new post holes, would be monitored. In response to this Greenlane Archaeology produced a project design for an archaeological watching brief, and Scheduled Monument consent for the erection of the signs was granted (Ref. S00082251) by English Heritage on 2nd April 2014. The watching brief was carried out on 12th May 2014.

1.1.2 The Abbey House Hotel was constructed in 1913-1914 by Sir Edwin Lutyens by Vickers of Barrow as a place to entertain guests and potential clients (Hyde and Pevsner 2010, 360). More pertinently, it is situated within the precinct of Furness Abbey, which was established in 1127 (Wood 1998) and is a Scheduled Monument.

1.2 Location, Geology, and Topography

1.2.1 Furness Abbey is located towards the south-west end of the Furness Peninsula between the towns of Dalton-in-Furness and Barrow-in-Furness, in southern Cumbria. This area is on the north side of Morecambe Bay on a sandy coastal plain consisting of gently undulating pastureland, and the Furness low fells begin a short distance to the north (Countryside Commission 1998, 65). The Abbey is situated at the base of the west edge of the steep sided and wooded Vale of Nightshade; this sheltered valley is fed by Mill Beck which has cut deep into the Sherwood sandstone geology of the area (Moseley 1978, fig 1). The Abbey House Hotel is situated on higher ground to the west of the Abbey, adjacent to the main road between Dalton-in-Furness and Barrow-in-Furness, is ranges from approximately 20m and 40m above sea level.

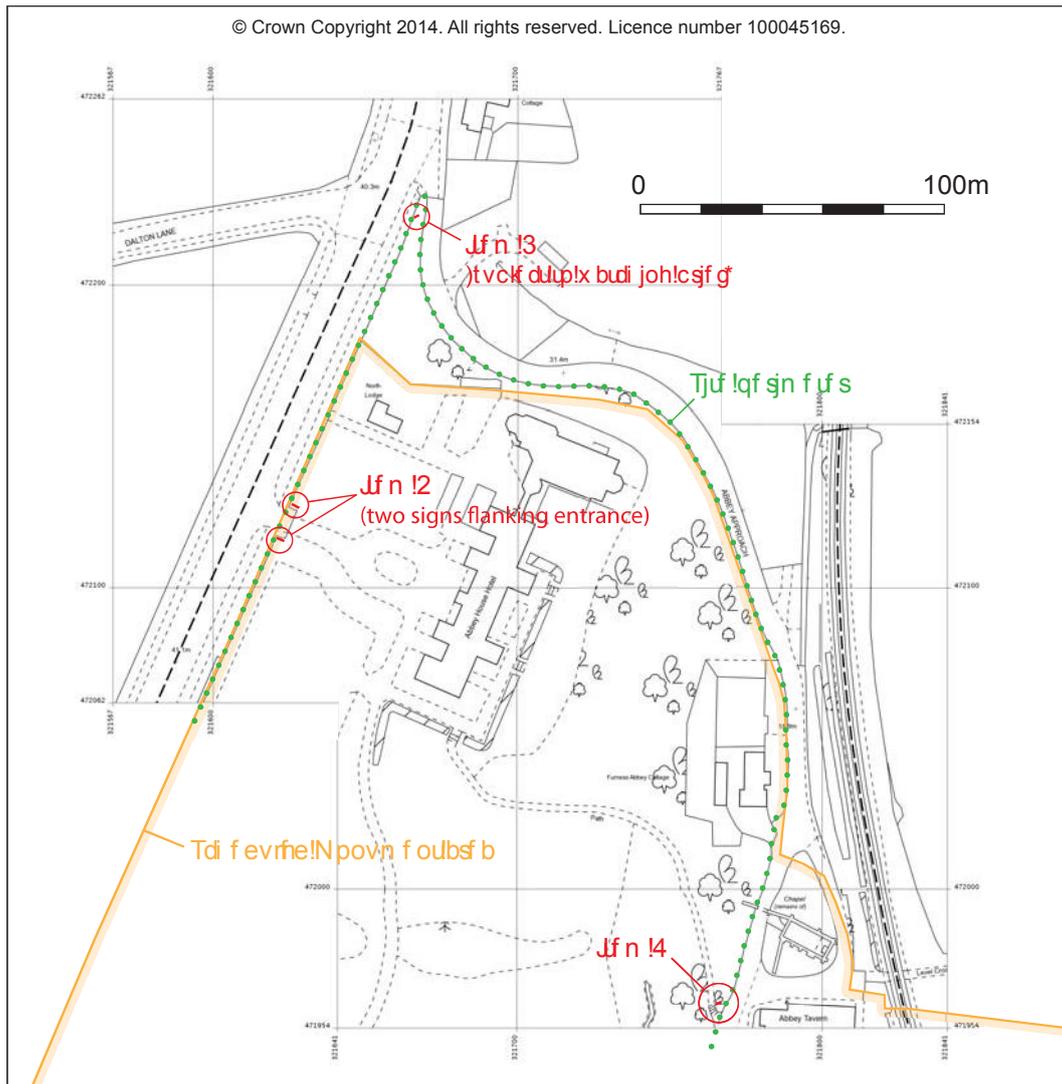
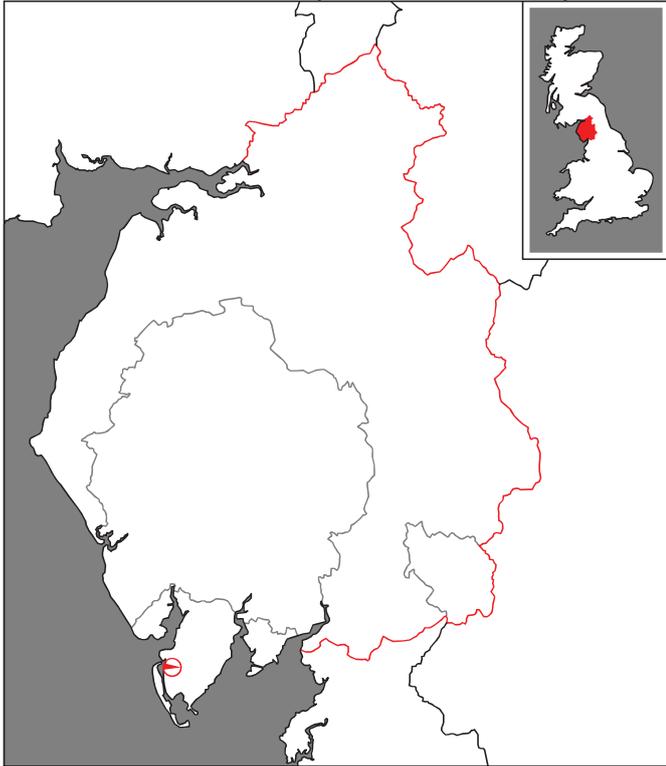


Figure 1: Site location

Client: Catford and Longford

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2. Methodology

2.1 Desk-Based Assessment

2.1.1 The historical background to the site is taken from an earlier desk-based assessment carried out as part of a previous phase of work at Furness Abbey (Greenlane Archaeology 2008). This principally comprised an examination of early maps of the site and published secondary sources.

2.2 Archaeological Watching Brief

2.2.1 Three locations for new signs were proposed. Item 1 comprised a pair of signs flanking the main entrance. Item 2 comprised a new pair of sign posts for a sign against the boundary in the north corner of the site, and Item 3 comprised a new sign attached to existing posts on the south-east side of the site, overlooking Abbey Approach. As only Item 2 involved any excavation work this was the only element that was monitored.

2.2.2 All aspects of the archaeological recording were carried out according to the standards and guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008) and Greenlane Archaeology's own excavation manual (2007). The deposits encountered were recorded in the following manner:

- **Written record:** descriptive records of all deposits were made using Greenlane Archaeology *pro forma* record sheets;
- **Photographs:** photographs in colour print and colour digital format were taken of the site as well as general working shots, including photographs taken prior to any work taking place and of those areas that were not otherwise being monitored. A selection of the colour digital photographs is included in this report. A written record of all of the photographs was also made using Greenlane Archaeology *pro forma* record sheets;
- **Drawings:** a location plan was supplied by the client.

2.2.3 No environmental samples were taken because no suitable deposits were encountered.

2.3 Finds

2.3.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

2.4 Archive

2.4.1 A comprehensive archive of the project has been produced in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 1*) and current IfA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991; Brown 2007). The archive, which comprises the drawn, written, and photographic record, will be deposited with the Cumbria Archive Centre in Barrow-in-Furness (CAC(B)). A copy of the report will be provided to the client, Greenlane Archaeology will retain a copy, a copy will also be provided for the Cumbria Historic Environment Record (HER), and a digital copy will form part of the OASIS scheme.

3. Desk-Based Assessment

3.1 Background History

3.1.1 The background to the site is intended to place the results of the watching brief in its local context. More specifically, information regarding the development and use of the site, where known, is also presented, which allows a more detailed understanding of the results of the watching brief. The following background to the Abbey is largely taken from the Victoria History of the County of Lancashire (Farrer and Brownbill 1914).

3.1.2 **Furness Abbey:** the site is within the grounds of Furness Abbey, an important Scheduled Monument (No. 13572). The Abbey was founded by Stephen, Count of Boulogne and Mortain, later king of England. He gave a site at Tulketh, Preston in 1124, before transferring the monks of the Savignac order to Furness in 1127. By 1147 this order had been incorporated into the Cistercian tradition making Furness Abbey the first Cistercian house in England, and further expansion of the site began. The remains of the Savignac monastery are still present above and below ground as well as the more extensive Cistercian monastery. The monastery grew in prosperity, and at the time of its dissolution in 1537 it was the second richest Cistercian monastery in England. The Abbey had acquired extensive property in the Lake District, Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire and the deep water port at Piel allowed access and trade with the Isle of Man and Ireland. Sheep farming played an important part in the Abbey's growing wealth, due to the price of wool, as did the continued exploitation of the Furness iron ore deposits, which paved the way for the region's post-medieval development.

3.1.3 Its increasing wealth led to greater political autonomy and independence, which attracted the attention of Scottish invaders; in the early 14th century it is recorded that the Abbot paid a ransom to Robert the Bruce in order to avoid further attack (NMR entry 13572). After the Dissolution the monastery was handed over to the crown and the land was subsequently granted to the king's minister Thomas Cromwell, two years later it was passed to Sir Thomas Curwen the head of a leading local family. Thomas Curwen passed the property to his son-in-law John Preston, and in 1671 the then owner Thomas Preston built a mansion house on the grounds. The mansion deteriorated until it was sold to the railway company and re-built into a hotel during the 1850's and the 1860's (Wood 1998, 34). The hotel suffered bomb damage in 1941 and was demolished in 1953 (*ibid*). Some traces of the north wing have been incorporated into the Abbey Tavern, which now stands in its place. The hotel was designed to serve the railway which was opened in 1847. In 1923 Richard Cavendish placed the ruins in the care of the Ministry of Works (*ibid*).

4. Fieldwork Results

4.1 Pre-excavation photographic record

4.1.1 As a general condition of the Scheduled Monument consent the site was recorded prior to the commencement of groundworks associated with the proposed development. Although only two locations were within the Scheduled Monument area (Items 1 and 3), a record of all three sign locations was made. As already outlined, Item 1 comprised a pair of signs flanking the main entrance, which were bolted onto concrete pads set on the existing ground surface and partially concealed with topsoil (Plate 1). No archaeological monitoring of this work was necessary. Item 2 was situated at the northern perimeter of the grounds of the Abbey House Hotel, although not within the Scheduled Monument area, within woodland and directly adjacent to the boundary wall (Plate 2 and Plate 3). A sign already present in this area was removed prior to the erection of the new sign, the pre-existing postholes were deemed insufficient and new ones were excavated and so this work was monitored (see *Section 4.2.1* below). Item 3 comprised the addition of a new sign to existing posts (Plate 4) and so required no monitoring.



Plate 1: New sign to be fixed into concrete base at Item 1 location required no excavation

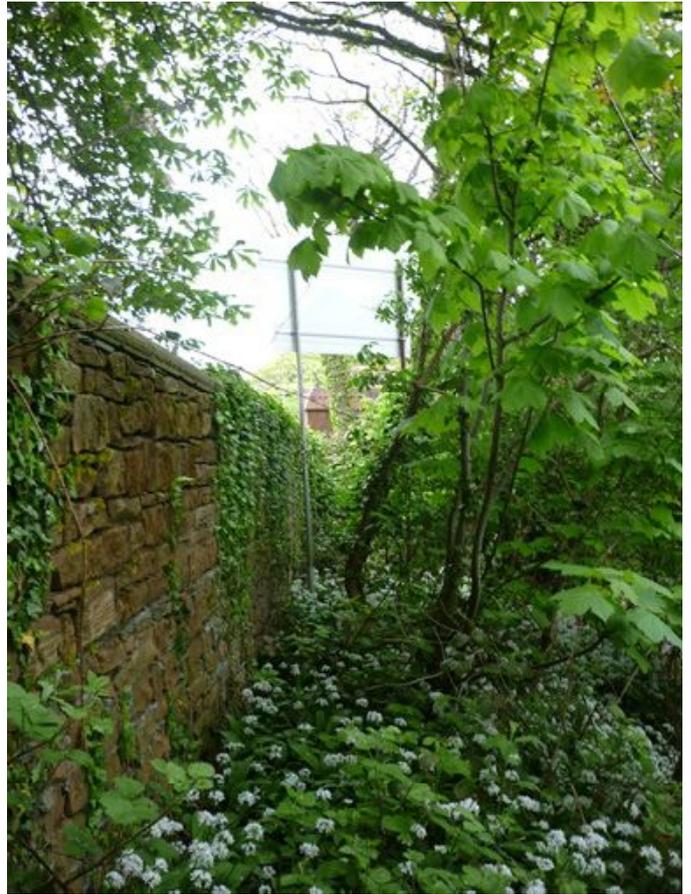


Plate 2 (left): The original sign to be removed at Item 2 location, viewed from the main road

Plate 3 (right): Pre excavation photograph of Item 2 location

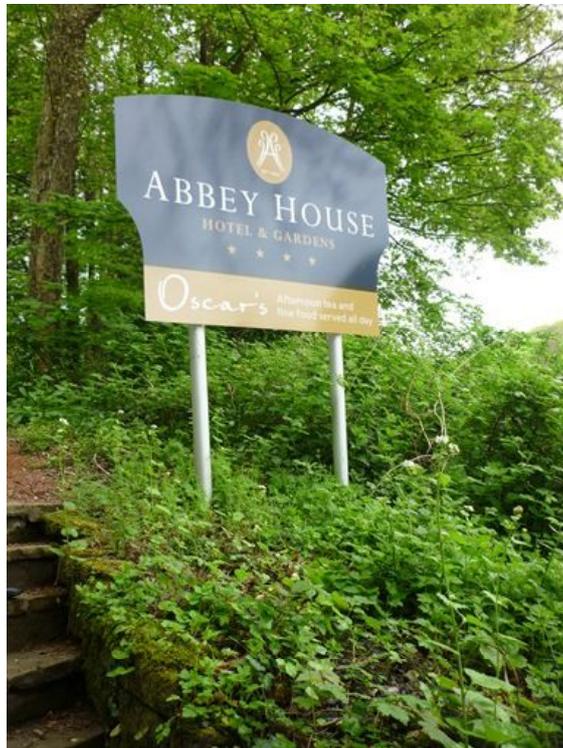


Plate 4: Item 3 following installation of new sign

4.2 Watching Brief

4.2.1 Work at Item 2 involved the excavation by hand of two postholes approximately 1.6m apart (Plate 5 and Plate 6). The location was extremely confined due to the dense undergrowth and presence of large trees. Each hole had a diameter of around 0.30m and was excavated to a depth of 0.70m. The ground in this area had been heavily disturbed by root action and several large roots were encountered within each posthole during the excavation. The ground was made up of loose, orangey-brown, silty-soil down to the required depth. No finds were recovered and no archaeological features were encountered.



Plate 5 (left): Western post hole, Item 2

Plate 6 (right): Interior of western post hole, Item 2

5. Discussion

5.1 Results

5.1.1 No archaeological finds or features were observed.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Although the close proximity of the Abbey House Hotel to Furness Abbey implies that the potential for finds or features of archaeological significance is high the works undertaken revealed nothing of archaeological significance. Item 2, in addition to being in a wooded area, was also adjacent to both a pre-existing sign and also the perimeter wall of the hotel grounds and had therefore most likely been disturbed by the construction of both these features (Plate 7), which would also have diminished the likelihood of any remains of archaeological interest surviving.



Plate 7: Working shot of Item 2 location

6. Bibliography

6.1 Primary and Cartographic Sources

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6.2 Secondary Sources

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Appendix 1: Project Design

ABBAY HOUSE HOTEL, ABBAY ROAD, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, CUMBRIA

Archaeological Watching Brief Project Design



Client: Catford and Longford

March 2014

Client: Catford and Longford

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 Following the submission of a planning application (Ref. B22/2014/0109) for the erection of a series of new signs at the Abbey House Hotel, Abbey Road, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria (NGR 361548 476015) an application for Scheduled Monument Consent was made. This project design has been produced in response to the expectation that a condition of that consent would be that an archaeological watching brief be carried out, and is intended to outline the methodology that would be used during the archaeological work.

1.1.2 The Abbey House Hotel was constructed in 1913-1914 by Sir Edwin Lutyens by Vickers of Barrow as a place to entertain guests and potential clients (Hyde and Pevsner 2010, 360). More pertinently, it is situated within the precinct of Furness Abbey, which was established in 1127 (Wood 1998) and is a Scheduled Monument.

1.2 Greenlane Archaeology

1.2.1 Greenlane Archaeology is a private limited company based in Ulverston, Cumbria, and was established in 2005 (Company No. 05580819). Its directors, Jo Dawson and Daniel Elsworth, have a combined total of over 18 years continuous professional experience working in commercial archaeology, principally in the north of England and Scotland. Greenlane Archaeology is committed to a high standard of work, and abides by the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) Code of Conduct. The watching brief will be carried out according to the Standards and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008).

1.3 Project Staffing

1.3.1 The project will be managed by **Dan Elsworth (MA (Hons), AIfA)**. Daniel graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1998 with an honours degree in Archaeology, and began working for the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, which became Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) in 2001. Daniel ultimately became a project officer, and for over six and a half years worked on excavations and surveys, building investigations, desk-based assessments, and conservation and management plans. These have principally taken place in the North West, and Daniel has a particular interest in the archaeology of the area. He has recently managed a wide variety of projects including building recordings of various sizes, watching briefs, and excavations in the region, including an excavation and evaluation in the centre of medieval Kendal (Greenlane Archaeology 2009a; 2010a), evaluation in the Roman *vicus* at Stanwix (Greenlane Archaeology 2010b), evaluation of a Scheduled post-medieval gunpowder works (Greenlane Archaeology 2010c), and watching briefs in Preston (Greenlane Archaeology 2009b; 2010d).

1.3.2 The watching brief will be carried out by **Tom Mace (BA (Hons), MA, MIfA)** or another suitably qualified member of staff, depending on scheduling constraints. Tom has extensive experience of working on a variety of archaeological projects, especially watching briefs, but also excavations, evaluations, and building recordings, as well as report writing and illustration production. He joined Greenlane Archaeology in 2008 having worked for several previous companies including Archaeological Solutions and Oxford Archaeology North.

1.3.3 All artefacts will be processed by Greenlane Archaeology, and it is envisaged that they will initially be assessed by Jo Dawson, who will fully assess any of post-medieval date. Medieval pottery will be assessed by Tom Mace, and other finds will be assessed by specialist sub-contractors as appropriate. Roman pottery will be assessed by Ruth Leary, and Roman coins by David Shotter. English Heritage and the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service will be notified of any other specialists, other than those named, whom Greenlane Archaeology wishes to engage.

1.3.4 Environmental samples and faunal remains, should significant deposits of these be recovered, will be processed by Greenlane Archaeology. It is envisaged that charred plant remains will be assessed by staff at Headland Archaeology Ltd, and faunal remains by Jane Richardson at ASWYAS. Should any human remains be recovered for assessment it is envisaged that these will be examined by Malin Horst at York Osteoarchaeology, following appropriate advice on initial processing.

2. Objectives

2.1 Rapid Desk-Based Assessment

2.1.1 Information outlining the development of the site will be collected, in order to place the results of the watching brief in context. This will primarily be acquired from secondary sources, but primary sources will be utilised where considered useful.

2.2 Watching Brief

2.2.1 To identify any surviving archaeological remains and to investigate and record any revealed archaeological remains or deposits.

2.3 Report

2.3.1 To produce a report detailing the results of the watching brief, which will outline the nature, form, extent, and date of any archaeological remains discovered.

2.4 Archive

2.4.1 Produce a full archive of the results of the watching brief.

3. Methodology

3.1 Rapid Desk-Based Assessment

3.1.1 Information about the site, intended to place the results of the watching brief in context, will be taken from the previous work carried out on the site. As a result no new primary sources will be consulted.

3.2 Watching Brief

3.2.1 The groundworks are to be monitored, with one archaeologist on site. If there are multiple machines operating on site it may be considered necessary to have more than one archaeologist on site.

3.2.2 The watching brief methodology will be as follows:

- Foundation trenches and/or trenches for services and any areas of ground reduction will be excavated under supervision by staff from Greenlane Archaeology;
- All deposits of archaeological significance will be examined by hand if possible in a stratigraphic manner, using shovels, mattocks, or trowels as appropriate for the scale;
- The position of any features, such as ditches, pits, or walls, will be recorded and where necessary these will be investigated in order to establish their full extent, date, and relationship to any other features. If possible, negative features such as ditches or pits will be examined by sample excavation, typically half of a pit or similar feature and approximately 10% of a linear feature;
- All recording of features will include detailed plans and sections at a scale of 1:20 or 1:10 where practicable or sketches where it is not, and photographs in both colour print and colour digital format. In addition, photographs will also be taken of the site before work begins and after completion;
- All deposits, drawings and photographs will be recorded on Greenlane Archaeology *pro forma* record sheets;
- All finds will be recovered during the watching brief for further assessment as far as is practically and safely possible. Should significant amounts of finds be encountered an appropriate sampling strategy will be devised;
- All faunal remains will also be recovered by hand during the watching brief as far as is practically and safely possible, but where it is considered likely that there is potential for the bones of fish or small mammals to be present appropriate volumes of samples will be taken for sieving;
- Deposits that are considered likely to have, for example, preserved environmental remains, industrial residues, and/or material suitable for scientific dating will be sampled. Bulk samples of between 20 and 60 litres in volume (or 100% of smaller features) where possible, depending on the size and potential of the deposit, will be collected from stratified undisturbed deposits and will particularly target negative features (e.g. gullies, pits and ditches) and occupation deposits such as hearths and floors. An assessment of the environmental potential of the site will be undertaken through the examination of samples of suitable deposits by specialist sub-contractors (see *Section 1.3.4* above), who will examine the potential for further analysis. All samples will be processed using methods appropriate to the preservation conditions and the remains present;
- Any articulated human remains discovered during the watching brief will be left *in situ*, and, if possible, covered. The client will be immediately informed as will the local coroner. Should it be considered

necessary to remove the remains this will require a Home Office licence, under Section 25 of the Burial Act of 1857, which will be applied for should the need arise;

- Any objects defined as 'treasure' by the Treasure Act of 1996 (HMSO 1996) will be immediately reported to the local coroner and securely stored off-site, or covered and protected on site if immediate removal is not possible;
- Should any significant archaeological deposits be encountered during the watching brief these will immediately be brought to the attention of the English Heritage and the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service and ground works in that area halted so that the need for further work can be determined. Any additional work (which would result in additional costs) will be agreed with English Heritage and the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, and subject to a variation to this project design.

3.3 Report

3.3.1 The results of the watching brief will be compiled into a report, which will contain the following sections as necessary:

- A front cover including the appropriate national grid reference (NGR);
- A concise non-technical summary of results, including the date the project was undertaken and by whom;
- Acknowledgements;
- Project Background;
- Methodology, including a description of the work undertaken;
- Results of the watching brief including descriptions of any deposits identified, their extent, form and potential date, and an assessment of any finds or environmental remains recovered during the watching brief;
- Discussion of the results;
- Illustrations at appropriate scales including:
 - a plan showing the location of the ground works;
 - plans and sections of the watching brief ground works, as appropriate, showing any features of archaeological interest;
 - photographs of the watching brief, including both detailed and general shots of features of archaeological interest and the trenches;
 - photographs of individual artefacts as appropriate.

3.4 Archive

3.4.1 The archive, comprising the drawn, written, and photographic record of the watching brief, formed during the project, will be stored by Greenlane Archaeology until it is completed. Upon completion it will be deposited with the Cumbria Archive Centre in Barrow-in-Furness. The archive will be compiled according to the standards and guidelines of the IFA (Brown 2007), and in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). In addition details of the project will be submitted to the Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigations (OASIS) scheme. This is an internet-based project intended to improve the flow of information between contractors, local authority heritage managers and the general public.

3.4.2 A copy of the report will be supplied to the client, a digital copy will be supplied to the client's agent, and within three months of the completion of fieldwork one copy will be provided to English Heritage and another will be provided to the Cumbria Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition, Greenlane Archaeology Ltd will retain one copy, and a digital copy will be deposited with the OASIS scheme as required.

3.4.3 The client will be encouraged to transfer ownership of the finds to a suitable museum. If no suitable repository can be found the finds may have to be discarded, and in this case as full a record as possible and necessary would be made of them beforehand.

4. Work timetable

4.1 Greenlane Archaeology will be available to commence the project on **31st March 2014**, or at another date convenient to the client. It is envisaged that the project will involve tasks in the following order:

- **Task 1:** watching brief;
- **Task 2:** post-excavation work on archaeological watching brief, including processing of finds and production of draft report and illustrations;
- **Task 3:** feedback, editing and production of final report, completion of archive.

5. Other matters

5.1 Access

5.1.1 Access to the site will be organised through co-ordination with the client and/or their agent(s).

5.2 Health and Safety

5.2.1 Greenlane Archaeology carries out risk assessments for all of its projects and abides by its internal health and safety policy and relevant legislation. Health and safety is always the foremost consideration in any decision-making process.

5.3 Insurance

5.3.1 Greenlane Archaeology has professional indemnity insurance to the value of **£1,000,000**. Details of this can be supplied if requested.

5.4 Environmental and Ethical Policy

5.4.1 Greenlane Archaeology has a strong commitment to environmentally- and ethically-sound working practices. Its office is supplied with 100% renewable energy by Good Energy, uses ethical telephone and internet services supplied by the Phone Co-op, is even decorated with organic paint, and has floors finished with recycled vinyl tiles. In addition, the company uses the services of The Co-operative Bank for ethical banking, Naturesave for environmentally-conscious insurance, and utilises public transport wherever possible. Greenlane Archaeology is also committed to using local businesses for services and materials, thus benefiting the local economy, reducing unnecessary transportation, and improving the sustainability of small and rural businesses.

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