Pilliven Farm
Witheridge
Devon

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation Excavation

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to:
The Yabsley family for their cooperation and for allowing unrestricted access to the site
Stephen Reed of DCHES

1.0 Introduction

Location: Pilliven Farm
Parish: Witheridge
County: Devon
NGR: 283400 115300

1.1 Background

South West Archaeology were commissioned by Ross Cant of Nuon Renewables (the Client) to undertake an evaluation excavation at at the proposed site of Franklyn Wind Farm, Pilliven Farm, Witheridge, Devon prior to the application for planning permission for development of the site. These works represent the second phase of archaeological investigation at the site following an initial geophysical survey.

The site lies about 2km east north east of Witheridge and extends across pasture subdivided by hedgebanks. Judging by the ruler-straight nature of these boundaries and the relatively elevated and isolated location, it is likely to have been an area of open rough-grazing enclosed in the nineteenth century. The site is at an elevation of 195-210 mAOD, in general rising to the north and east. The northernmost field was particularly waterlogged and the easternmost had recently been ploughed and reseeded with grass.

1.2 Summary

Most of the evaluation trenches revealed no material of archaeological significance. However, Trenches 5, 7 and 8 did contain ditches of unknown function and date, with that in Trench 8 corresponding with part of a circular geophysical anomaly. These features were excavated and recorded but produced no artefactual material, but they may be considered worthy of further investigation if they are to be disturbed in the course of the proposed development.

1.3 Methodology

The excavation was directed by Martin Gillard and was carried out on the 12th, 13th, 14th, 17th and 18th March 2008. The work was undertaken in accordance with IFA guidelines.

The trenches were placed so as to sample areas of the site most impacted by the proposed development; or to examine geophysical anomalies within the general area of development identified by previous survey (South West Archaeology 2008).

2.0 Results of the Evaluation Excavation

2.1 The Excavation Area

Eleven trenches were excavated (Fig. 2) by machine, their total length was 600m with a width of 1.1m. The excavation was carried out to the depth of the top of clearly undisturbed subsoil or possible archaeological features.

The entire site was covered with a layer of topsoil usually 0.2-0.3m thick; this was a mid to dark grey-brown clay silt with a few stone inclusions <100mm across (mainly smaller). No artefactual material was observed within this soil during excavation on the site.
The subsoil was generally a firm, orange or yellow-brown clay silt with some areas of grey-white silt clay; it contained stone <100mm across, concentrated in places in stony bands. In one limited area (see trench 9 below) the 'natural' took the form of solid bedrock.

2.2 Evaluation Trenches

2.2.1 Trench 1 (50m in length)

As noted above the field containing this trench was wetter than the others in the development area; the topsoil was also thinner than that elsewhere (0.15-0.25m). The only features observed were two ditches running north-south 10 and 20m from the north east end of the trench respectively. These were 0.3m wide, 75mm deep and were filled with a mix of the topsoil and clay-silt subsoil.

The surface of the field in this area was marked by a series of slight north-south ridges approximately 4m apart; these were visible as a gentle undulation in the surface of the subsoil no more than 100mm in height. This ridging and the two ditches are probably related to relatively recent efforts at drainage.

2.2.2 Trench 2 (50m in length)

The only features observed in this trench were two stone-filled field drains running east-south-east/ west-north-west 7.6m and 24.2m from the north end of the trench. These corresponded with anomalies revealed by the geophysical survey.

2.2.3 Trench 3 (100m in length, T-shaped and divided into two equal sections)

The only feature observed in this trench was a stone-filled field drain running north-east/ south west 15m from the west end of the east-west branch of this trench.

2.2.4 Trench 4 (50m in length, T-shaped and divided into two equal sections)

No features were observed in this trench.

2.2.5 Trench 5 (50m in length, Fig. 3 and Plate 1)

About 7m from the east end of this trench lay a ditch [501] running north west-south east. It was up to 0.4m deep by 0.6m wide, approximately 1.9m of its length was visible across the trench. In profile the cut was 'U' shaped, being a little steeper to the west when compared to the east. The cut had one fill (502), a fairly firm grey-brown clay-silt containing some sub-angular stone, up to 100mm across, particularly against its eastern edge. No artefactual material was found within this fill. In the absence of any artefactual evidence Interpretation of this feature is difficult; it may be of archaeological significance.

The geophysical anomalies running roughly east-west at the eastern end of this trench matched variations of the subsoil in this area.

2.2.6 Trench 6 (50m in length, T-shaped and divided into two equal sections)
About 1.5m from the south end of the north-south branch of this trench a shallow, flat-based gully, 0.4m across, was observed running north east-south west. It was only 100mm deep and was filled with a mix of topsoil with some lumps of yellow subsoil within it; this suggested a recent origin.

A stone-filled field drain also ran south west-north east across the southern and eastern arms of this trench; this matched an anomaly seen in the geophysical survey.

2.2.7 Trench 7 (50m in length, Fig. 4)
This trench was divided into two parts by a modern, metalled track; the track was not excavated owing to its continued use by the landowner. Just north of the track in this trench an east-west linear feature was visible. The geophysical survey indicates that this was the same feature as [803] - discussed below. As this was identified as a relatively modern field boundary in trench 8 the section of it in trench 7 was not excavated.

Located in the middle of the southern part of this trench (approximately 9m from the metalled track) was feature [701] (Plate 2). Upon excavation it proved tobe elongated in form, extending 2.0m south east from the western edge of excavation, to a rounded end. It was 0.7-0.9m wide and up to 0.35m deep; it did become shallower and narrower toward the edge of excavation indicating that it may have terminated not far beyond it. The feature was 'U' shaped in profile and a little irregular in form. It contained two clay silt fills; the upper (702) was mid grey and contained a little stone <20mm and some charcoal. The lower (703) was firm and yellow-grey in colour, containing some stone <100mm and a little charcoal.

No artefactual material was recovered making immediate dating and interpretation difficult.

2.2.8 Trench 8 (50m in length, Fig. 5)
A pair of parallel east-west ditches [803] and [805] were observed in this trench, 2.5m apart (the northernmost being about 11m from the northern end of excavation). Each was about 2m wide, 0.2m deep, with a flat base and filled with a slightly sandy grey-brown clay silt (804) and (806). They matched a geophysical anomaly that itself matched a hedgebank seen on the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey mapping; this was ruler-straight and suggestive of late enclosure.

In the southern part of this trench, starting about 8m south of the metalled track, a linear feature [801] was revealed (Plate 3), running south west from the eastern edge of excavation and curving to the west before terminating about 0.2m from the western edge of excavation. A full length of about 2.5m was revealed, of around 0.6m in width, steep-sided on its north west edge and much shallower on its south east edge. The depth of this feature varied, with two deeper areas revealed; one toward the end of the cut and the other against the eastern edge of excavation. These areas were up to 0.4m deep whilst the cut in between was only 0.15m deep at its shallowest. There was no discernable difference in the fills along the length of this feature other than their depth. The upper fill (802) was a brown grey clay silt containing some charcoal and stone <50mm across. The lower fill (807) was a grey clay silt, also with charcoal but little or no stone. No artefactual material was recovered.
This curving feature matched part of a circular geophysical anomaly of about 10m in diameter. The northern edge of the anomaly lies underneath a metalled track which is required by the landowner for access and was therefore left undisturbed.
Considering the evidence for prehistoric activity in the area (a group of upstanding barrows is found about 1km to the east) this feature must be considered of potential

archaeological significance and worthy of further investigation if it is to be disturbed by the proposed development.

A stone-filled field drain also ran south west-north east across the southern end of this trench which also matched an anomaly seen in the geophysical survey.

2.2.9 Trench 9 (50m in length)

In the northern and southern parts of this trench, stone-filled field drains were observed. Between these, about 5m from the trench's southern end there was a feature, 7m wide north to south, cut into the natural bedrock. This was filled with a loose, grey-brown clay silt with many stone inclusions. It matched a strong geophysical anomaly running about 50m east-west. This anomaly coincided with an earthwork cutting into the hillside. The landowner recalled that his father had filled in a quarry in the field containing this trench, an explanation matching both the nature of the feature and its fill. Furthermore, it is usual to find small quarries within areas of nineteenth-century enclosure such as that around this site.

2.2.10 Trench 10 (50m in length, equally divided into two sections)

No features were observed in this trench.

2.2.11 Trench 11(50m in length, equally divided into two sections)

No features were observed in this trench.

2.3 The Charcoal

Charcoal was recovered in samples from contexts: (702), (703) and (802). After wet sieving the following characteristics could be observed concerning the material:
All of it consisted of wood charcoal (as opposed to chaff or grains for example).
No intact roundwood was found to be present.
The charcoal was much fragmented to the following sizes: (702) generally <10mm but occasionally <20mm; (703) generally <10mm but occasionally <15mm; (802) generally <5mm but occasionally <10mm.
The material should be in sufficient quantity to provide a *terminus post quem* for the contexts containing the charcoal by carbon-14 dating for the fills of features [701] and [702].

However, it is not recommended at this stage that further analysis of the charcoal is necessary. Fragmented wood charcoal scattered throughout contexts may be residual and will not provide a close date for the context. Furthermore, it is felt that the excavated features themselves are sufficient to inform any decision concerning the proposed development on the site and its possible impact upon the archaeology.

3.0 Conclusion

Most of the trenches in the area of proposed development revealed either no features or those that could be related to agricultural activity in the relatively recent past. However, trenches 5, 7 and 8 contained features that do not fall into this category. In the case of the feature in trench 8 this matched part of a circular anomaly identified in the geophysical survey. Although there has been no past excavation in the area of the development, surviving monuments nearby are indicative of prehistoric activity and therefore it is possible that this could be the origin of these features.

The feature in trench 8 may be the ring ditch from a ploughed-out Bronze-Age barrow. As barrows are usually found in groups, often in association with other funerary or ceremonial features, it is possible that other evidence of prehistoric activity might be found in the vicinity. The features in 5 and 7 could also be of prehistoric origin, as part of a possible barrow group. Furthermore, the geophysical survey shows a similar circular anomaly to that investigated in trench 8, 40m away to the south southeast - beyond the limit of the development (see Figure 2). Conditions for geophysical survey were not ideal throughout the site (see South West Archaeology 2008) so it is possible that there are further such features present which were not identified in the survey. This is further evidence for the presence of a possible barrow group.

Therefore, further archaeological investigation may be necessary in advance of the proposed development, should there be any below-ground disturbance, particularly in the area of trenches 5, 7 and 8.

4.0 Bibliography and References

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2001: *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation.*

Institute of Field Archaeologists, 2001: *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation.*

South West Archaeology, 2008: *Pilliven Farm, Witheridge, Devon:* Report No. 080318-WPF08

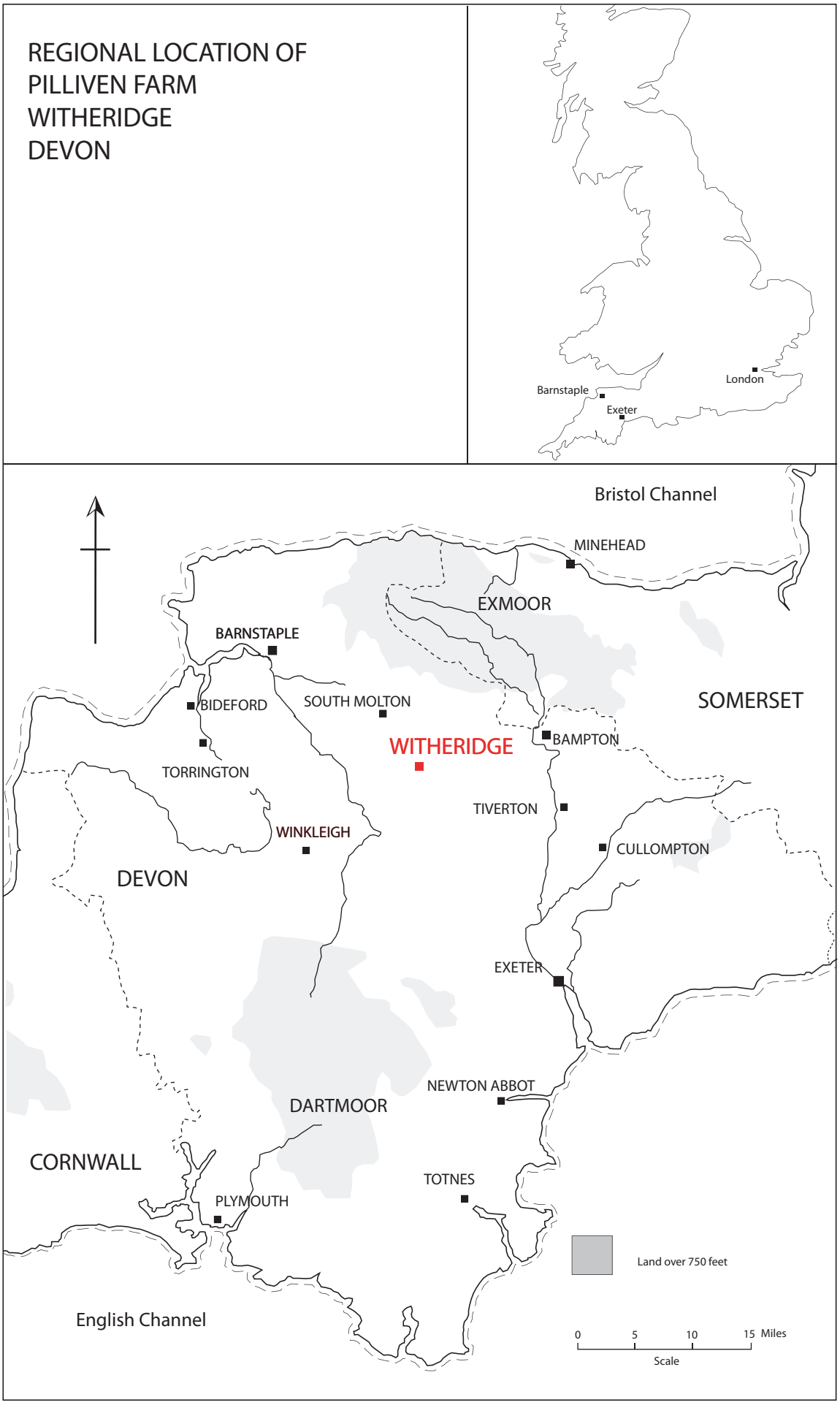

Fig. 1a: Regional location.

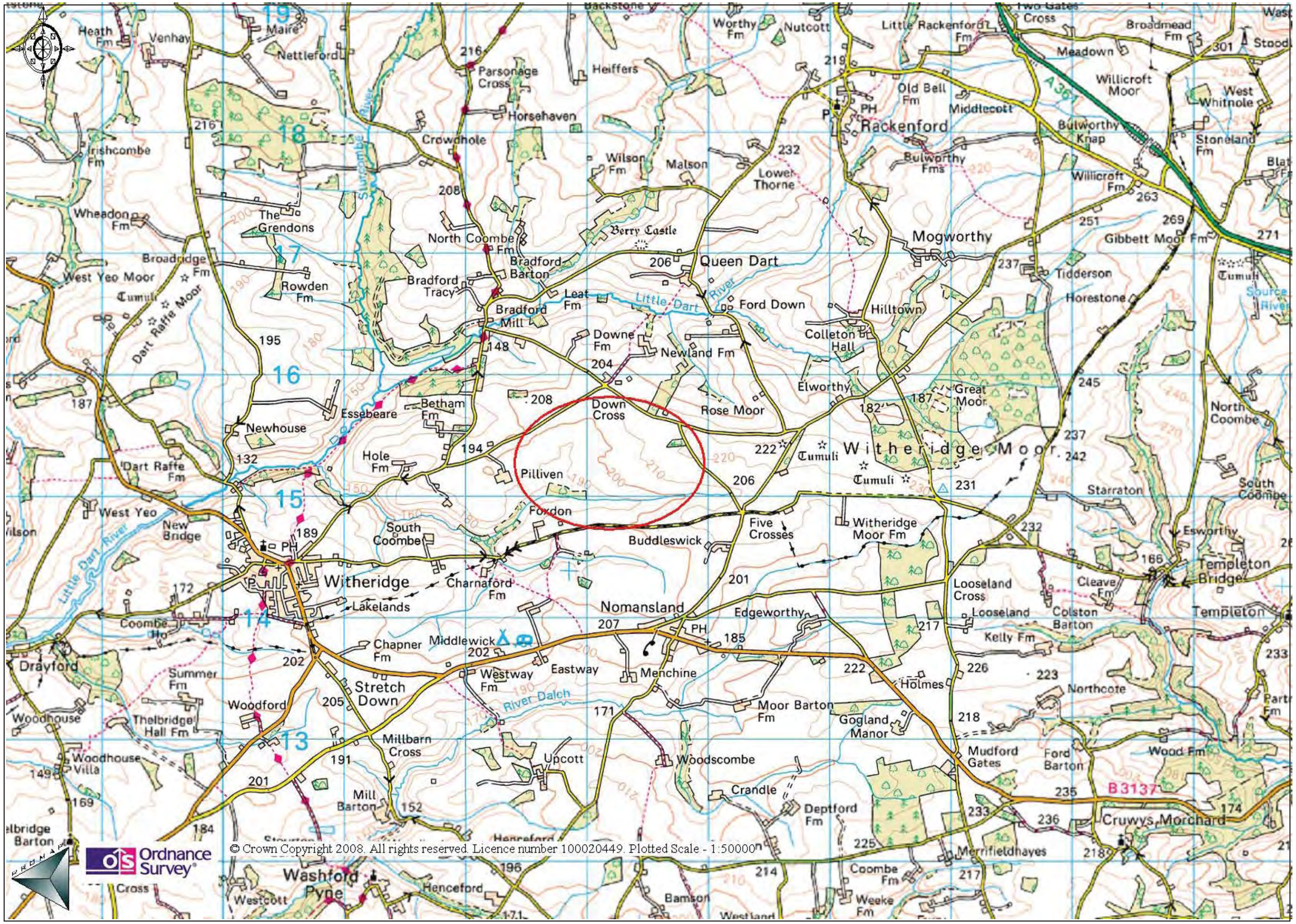

Fig. 1b: Site location.

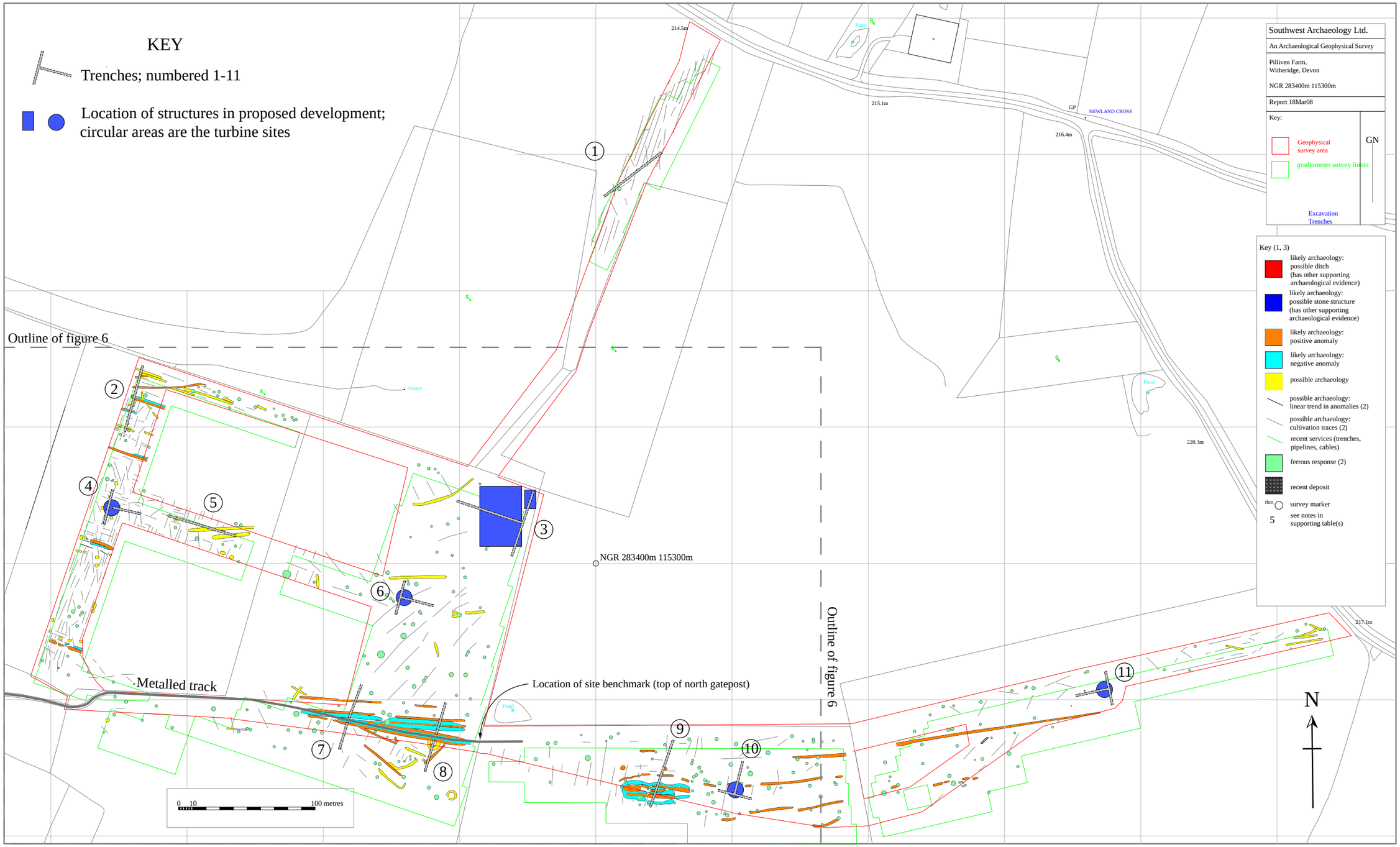

Fig. 2: Trenching for archaeological evaluation at Franklyn Windfarm, Witheridge; overlies interpretation of results of geophysical survey by Ross Dean, South West Archaeology Ltd.

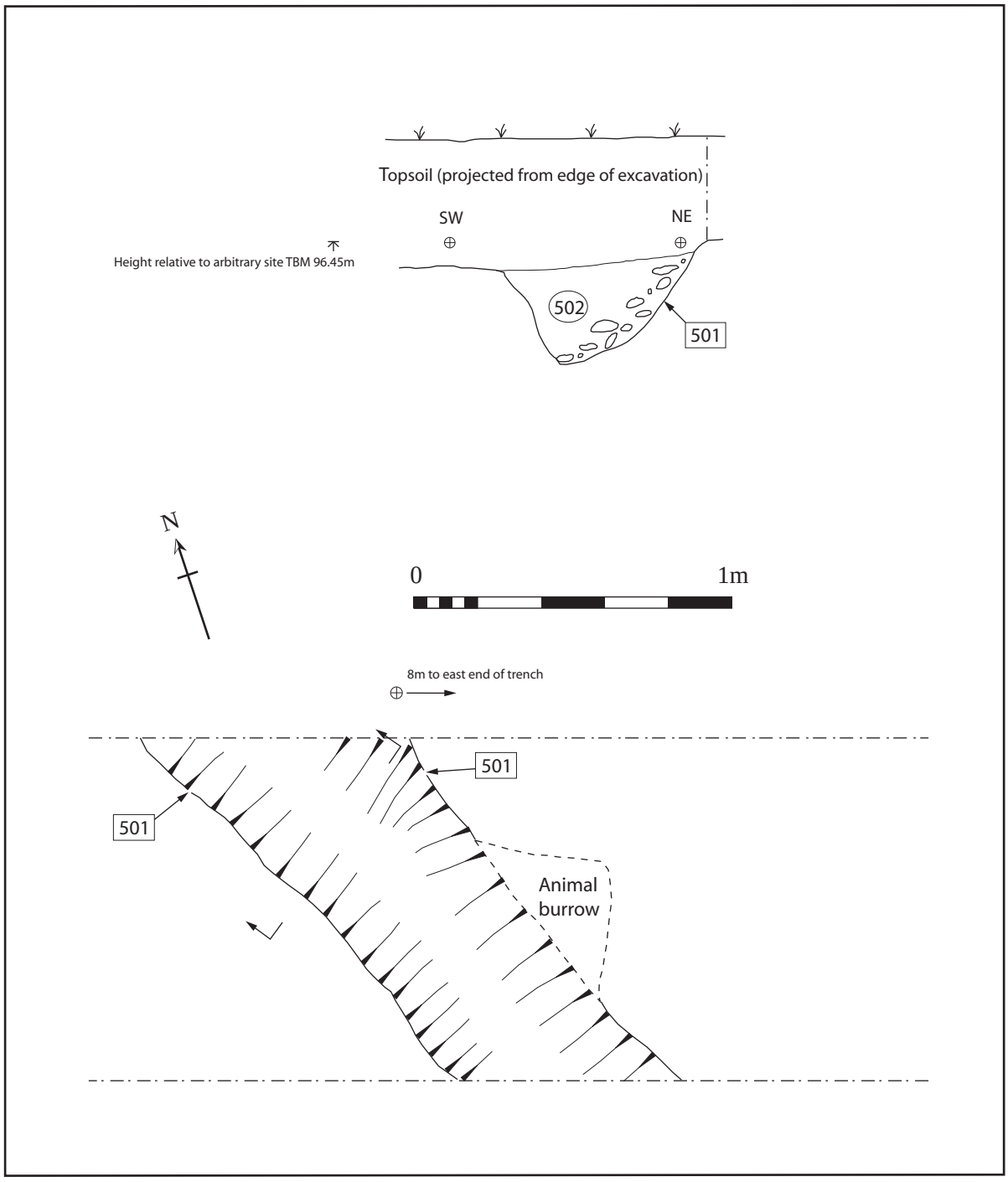

Fig. 3: Section and plan of ditch [501] in trench 5. The site benchmark used was the top of the northern gatepost of the gateway to the east ot Trench 8 (see figure 2 for location). It was assigned the value of 100m. This is the benchmark also used in figures 4 and 5.

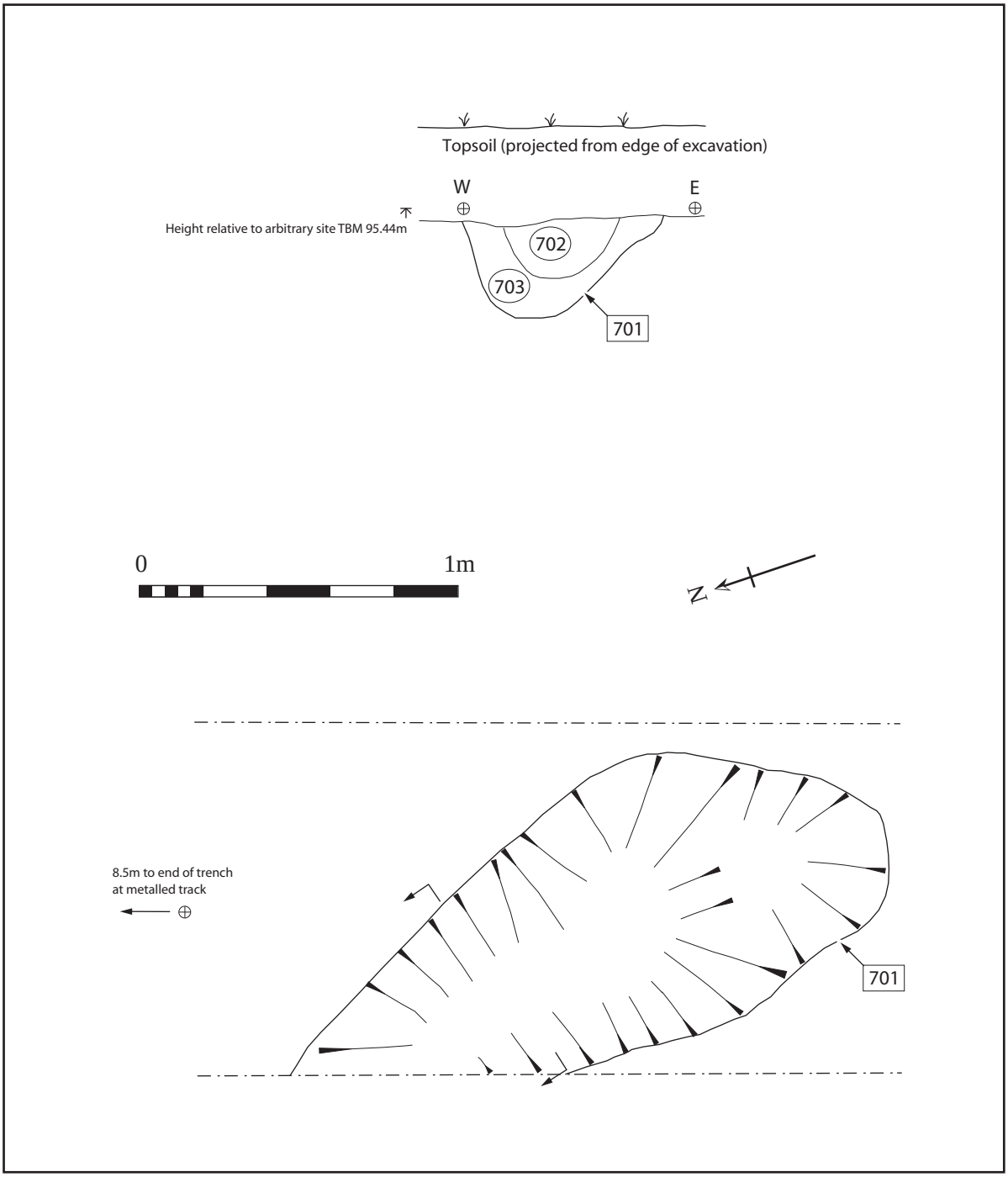

Fig. 4: Section and plan of ditch [701] in trench 7.

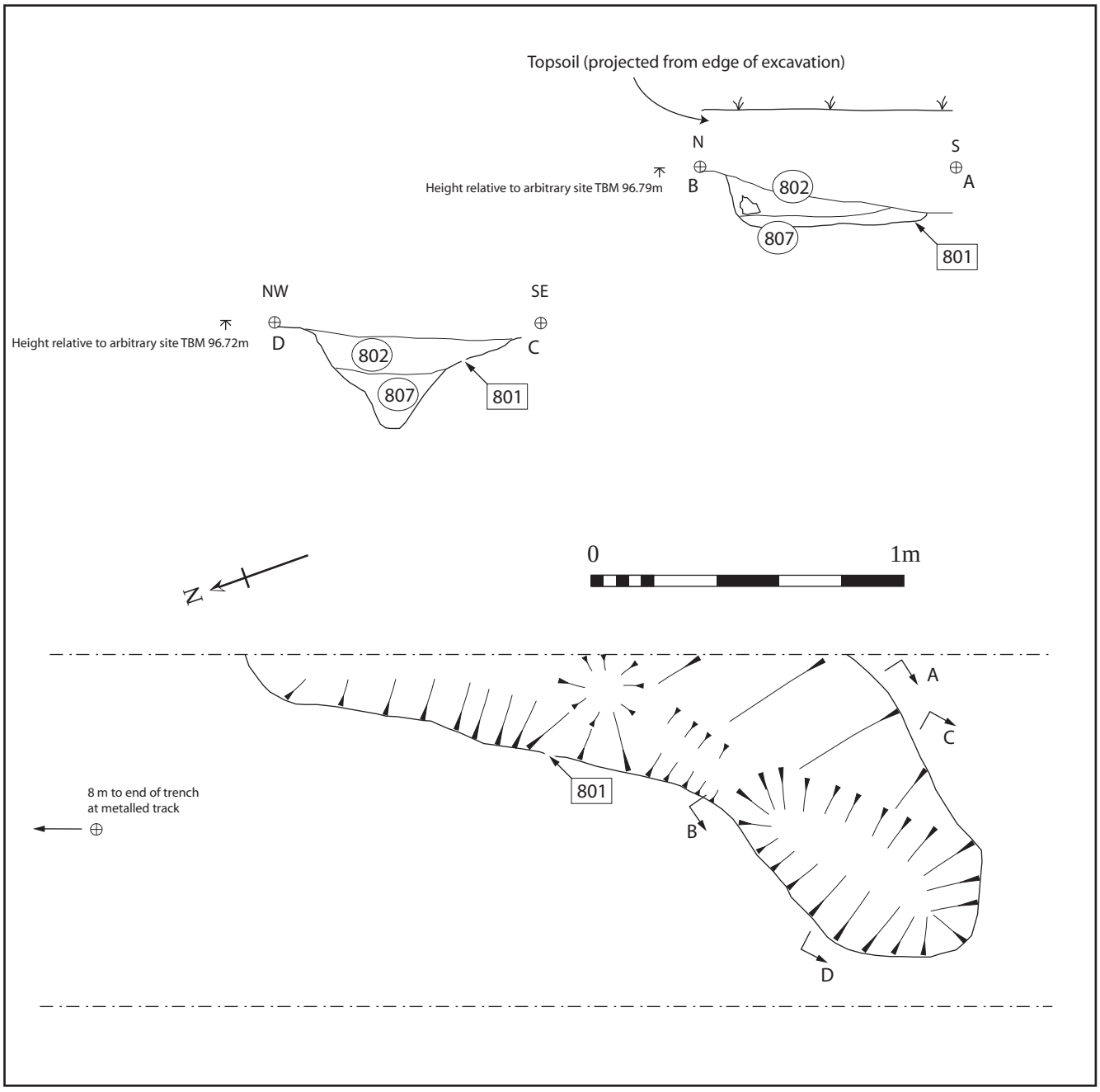

Fig. 5: Sections and plan of ditch [801] in trench 8.

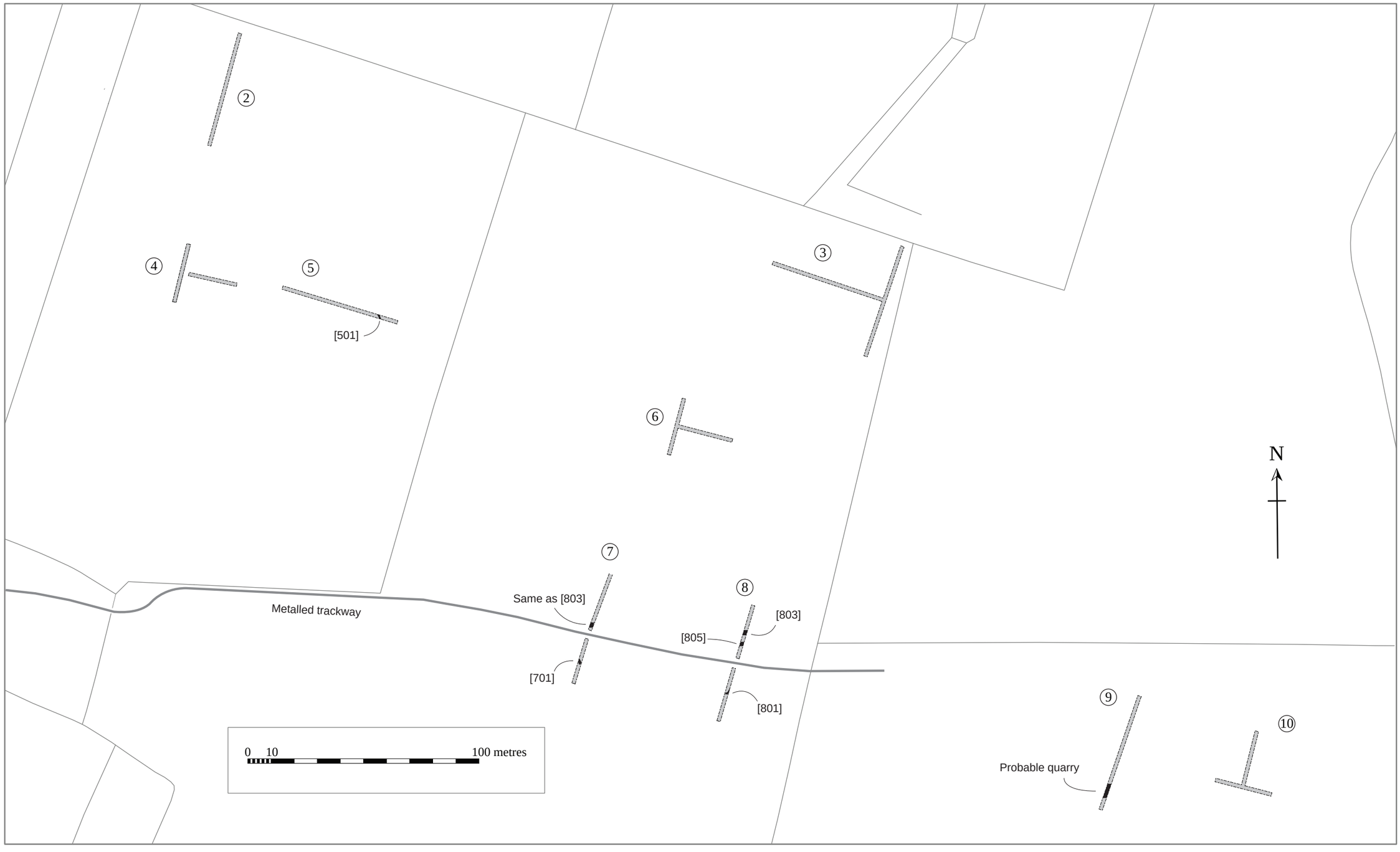

Fig. 6: Location of archaeological features recorded during archaeological evaluation at Franklyn Windfarm, Witheridge. Note that trenches 1 and 11 lie off the map to the north and east respectively, they contained no archaeological features.

Plate 1: Ditch [501] viewed from south east; 0.5m scale.

Plate 2: Ditch [701] viewed from south; 0.5m scale.

Plate 3: Ditch [801] viewed from south west; 0.5m scale.

Appendix 1

WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND RECORDING AT FRANKLYN WIND FARM, DEVON

Location: Franklyn Wind Farm (Pillven Farm)
Parish: Witheridge
District: North Devon
County: Devon
NGR: 283000 115400
Proposal: Construction of Franklyn Wind Farm

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document forms a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and details the proposed scheme of archaeological evaluation and recording at the site of Franklyn Wind Farm, Witheridge, Devon. These works represent the second phase of archaeological investigation at the site following an initial geophysical survey. The WSI has been drawn up by South West Archaeology (SWARCH) at the request of Ross Cant of Nuon Renewables (the Client) with regard to the archaeological works required before the seeking of planning consent for the construction works.

1.2 The WSI and the schedule of work it proposes have been devised in consultation with and conforms to Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES) requirements.

1.3 The following scheme of work recommend by DCHES with reference to the above and covered by this WSI consists of a series of evaluation trenches and recording work within those areas marked on the attached plan.

2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 A desk-based study was carried out by Andrew Pearson for the Client – it showed no known sites of archaeological significance within the development area although a prehistoric barrow cemetery lies 0.6km to the east and a Roman fortification can be found at Berry Castle about 1km to the north (both being scheduled monuments).

2.2 A geophysical survey carried out by South West Archaeology Ltd for the Client showed some anomalies within the proposed development area that may be of archaeological significance. An interpretation of the results of this survey accompanies this WSI and has been used to inform the placing of evaluation trenches.

3.0 AIMS

3.1 To investigate the site to assess whether any archaeological deposits will be affected by the proposed development and to inform the decision of Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES) on the need, or not, for further archaeological intervention. This will be achieved by a series of evaluation trenches; all archaeological deposits that are exposed will be investigated and recorded.

4.0 METHOD

4.1 The Client will provide SWARCH with details of the location of existing services and of proposed groundworks within the site area, and of the proposed construction programme.

4.2 Health and Safety requirements will be observed at all times by any archaeological staff working on site.

4.2.1 Appropriate PPE will be employed at all times.

4.2.2 The site archaeologist will undertake any site safety induction course provided by the Client.

4.2.3 If the depth of trenching exceeds 1.2 metres the trench sides will need to be shored or stepped to enable the archaeologist to examine and if appropriate record the section of the trench. The provision of such measures will be the responsibility of the client.

4.3 Archaeological evaluation

Archaeological evaluation trenches will be undertaken in locations agreed with DCHES and in reference to the geophysical survey already carried out. This will consist of trenches 1.2m wide positioned to enable a representative sample of the development area to be examined whilst evaluating both those areas identified of archaeological potential by the geophysical survey and those areas to be most impacted by the proposed development e.g.: the sites of proposed structures and construction compound. The eleven trenches to be excavated are marked on the accompanying map; they will investigate the following:
Trenches 4, 6, 10 and 11: examine the proposed locations for wind turbines.
Trench 3: examines the proposed location of site compound.
Trenches 2, 5, 7, 8 and 9: examine various geophysical anomalies thought worthy of further analysis for clarification of their form, date and function.
Trench 1: examines an area of the development not covered by any of the other trenches.
The trenches will be located with a Total Station to a high degree of accuracy using the data from the geophysical survey which was itself based upon digital mapping from Promap.

4.3.1 The archaeological work will be carried out in accordance with the *Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for an archaeological Excavati*on (r*evised 1995).*

4.3.2 The trenches are to be excavated using a 360o tracked or JCB-type machine with a toothless grading bucket to the surface of archaeological deposits, the depth of undisturbed *in situ* weathered subsoil or to a depth that will not be affected by the development - whichever is the highest in the stratigraphic sequence. At least one section of each trench will be cleaned by hand and examined for the presence of features and the recovery of artefacts.

4.3.3 Spoil will be examined for the recovery of artefacts.

4.3.4 Should archaeological or palaeoenvironmental remains be exposed, the site archaeologist will investigate, record and sample such deposits. Excavation of exposed archaeological features shall be carried out by hand, stratigraphically, and fully recorded by context to IFA guidelines. If archaeological features are exposed, then *as a minimum*:
Small discrete features will be fully excavated
Larger discrete features will be half-sectioned (50% excavated)
Long linear features will be excavated to sample at least 10% of their length – with investigative excavations distributed along the exposed length of any such feature; should such features lie perpendicular to the trench then 50% of the revealed length will be excavated.

4.3.5 In exceptional circumstances where materials of a particularly compact nature are encountered, these may be removed with a toothed bucket, subject to agreement with archaeological staff on site.

4.3.6 If complex or extraordinary archaeological deposits are exposed then the need for further mitigation will be agreed in consultation with the DCHES.

4.3.7 Human remains must be left *in-situ*, covered and protected. Removal can only take place under appropriate Home Office and environmental health regulations. Such removal must be in compliance with the relevant primary legislation.

4.3.8 Should gold or silver artefacts be exposed, these will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local coroner according to the procedures relating to the Treasure Act 1996. Where removal cannot be effected on the same working day as the discovery suitable security measures will be taken to protect the finds from theft.

4.4 All excavation will be carried out by staff with appropriate training and experience under adequate supervision. Archaeological contexts will be removed individually wherever possible, in reverse stratographic sequence. Use of pick or mattock, or further machine excavation, will only be carried out on homogeneous layers where it can reasonably be argued that more detailed excavation would provide no more information of value.

4.5 Any alterations to this written scheme of investigation or queries concerning its execution shall be negotiated with DCHES.

4.6 SWARCH will agree monitoring arrangements with DCHES and give two weeks notice, unless a shorter period is agreed, of commencement of the fieldwork. Details will be agreed of any monitoring points where decisions on options within the programme are to be made. Monitoring will continue until the deposition of the site archive and finds.

5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

All features identified will be recorded. Archaeological recording will be based on IFA guidelines and those advised by DCHES and will consist of:

5.1 Recording the location of archaeological deposits and features.

5.2 Labelling and bagging of finds on site. Post-1800 unstratified pottery may be discarded on site after a representative sample has been retained.

5.3 Exposed features will be recorded in plan and/or section at a minimum scale of 1:20, larger where necessary. The drawn and written record will be on an appropriately archivable medium. The photographic record will be made in B/W print supplemented by digital or colour transparency.

5.4 Standardised pro forma recording sheets for each archaeological feature and context.

5.5 A site location plan on an Ordnance Survey base map; pre- and post-excavation plans at an appropriate scale showing all features and excavations in the development area. These maps will show the relationship of the site to the OS grid and include all benchmarks used.

5.6 Heights relative to Ordnance Datum will be shown on all plans and sections.

5.7 A 'Harris Matrix' diagram will be compiled and checked on site to record all stratigraphic relationships.

6.0 ARCHIVE AND REPORT

6.1 An ordered and integrated site archive will be prepared in accordance with The Management of Archaeological Projects (English Heritage, 1991 2nd edition) upon completion of the entire project. The archive will be produced to the relevant archive standards. This will include a photographic record of digital imagery with suitably archivable prints produced by a photographic laboratory. The drawn and written record will be on an appropriately archivable medium. The archive and finds will be deposited with the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon under accession number 2008.18. Conditions for the deposition of the archive will be agreed with the Museum.

6.2 An illustrated summary report will be produced as soon as possible following completion of fieldwork, and submitted to Devon County Historic Environment Service and the Client.

6.3 The report will include the following elements:

6.3.1 A location plan and overall site plan showing distribution of archaeological features;

6.3.2 Plans and sections of significant features or deposits at a relevant scale;

6.3.3 A description of any remains and deposits identified including an interpretation of their character and significance;

6.3.4 An assessment of significant artefacts, environmental and scientific dating samples together with recommendations for further analysis as appropriate;

6.3.5 Any specialist reports commissioned;

6.3.6 Discussion of the archaeological deposits encountered and their context.

6.4 DCCHES will receive the report within three months of completion of fieldwork, dependant on the provision of specialist reports, radiocarbon dating results etc, the production of which may exceed this period. If a substantial delay is anticipated then an interim report will be produced. The report will be supplied to the HES on the understanding that one of these copies will be deposited for public reference in the HER. In addition to the hard copies of the report, one copy will be provided to the HES in digital format, in a format to be agreed in advance with the HES, on the understanding that it may in future be made available to researchers via a web-based version of the HER.

6.5 Should they merit it; the results of these investigations will be published in an appropriate academic journal. If required, after the production of a summary report, a programme and timetable for this will be submitted to Devon County Historic Environment Service and the Client for approval.

6.6 A copy of the report detailing the results of these investigations will be submitted to the OASIS (*Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological Investigations*) database under OASIS no. southwest 1-39156.

7.0 PERSONNEL

The project will be managed by Colin Humphreys; site work will be directed by Martin Gillard (SWARCH personnel). Relevant staff of the DCHES will be consulted as appropriate. Where necessary appropriate specialist advice will be sought, (see list of consultant specialists in Appendix 1 below).

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