



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the past and future together

Edintore Wind Farm

Cultural Heritage Baseline Survey (Direct Impacts)



Summary of Findings and Recommendations

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Cultural Heritage Baseline Survey (Direct Impacts)

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

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Summary

A desk-based assessment and walk-over survey were carried out to provide baseline information on cultural heritage features that might be affected by a proposed wind farm at Edintore, Banffshire. A precautionary watching brief is recommended on topsoil removal for construction in two areas. Visual impacts on surrounding sites are being assessed separately.

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Acknowledgements

Background mapping is reproduced from Ordnance Survey data under the company's licence 100043217. We are grateful to Cube Engineering for commissioning this work and sharing information and relevant material.

Location

The site is centred at NJ 422 468 and occupies a sloping site between approximately 240 and 300m above sea level.



Figure 1 Location

Objectives

The purpose of this survey was to identify as far as possible any features or structures of archaeological or cultural heritage significance that might be directly affected by the wind farm development, and to make recommendations for mitigation.

The objective was to develop the necessary background knowledge and understanding of the wind farm site and its wider context; consider its cultural significance and all phases of its development; and ensure that where possible, features and artefacts are preserved in situ with only the minimum degree of intervention considered appropriate. Where preservation in situ cannot be achieved, archaeology should be fully recorded to professional standards.

All archaeological survey and recording has been carried out throughout in accordance with the professional standards published by the Institute of Archaeologists (IfA).

A separate desk-based exercise will examine and assess sites and features outwith the site boundary for possible visual impacts on the setting of sites and features. The desk-based assessment covered all sites within a radius of 5 km from the turbines, but this report deals with the possible direct, physical impacts from construction, maintenance or decommissioning of the wind farm.

Method

The survey of possible direct impacts reported here covered approximately 57 ha, to include the full extent of the site, including the turbine sites, crane hard standings and proposed access roads. The locations of any borrow pits and substation / control and maintenance compound have not yet been determined.

Desk based assessment

An initial desk based assessment was carried out in January-March 2010. This reviewed all recorded archaeological or historical features that might be affected by windfarm construction or maintenance, including sites and buildings of national importance, defined as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed buildings, and any recorded archaeological sites.

The following sources were consulted:

- Aberdeenshire Council Sites and Monuments Record (ASMR);
- National Monuments Record for Scotland (www.rcahms.gov.uk);
- National Library of Scotland map collection (<http://www.nls.uk>);
- Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Collections (<http://www.socantscot.org/>);
- The Statistical Accounts of Scotland (<http://edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot/>).

The desk-based assessment compiled the following data for the windfarm site:

- The location and description of any recorded historic buildings and structures;
- An evaluation of the sensitivity and value of cultural heritage sites;
- An assessment of the location and extent of areas of high archaeological potential.

Walk Over Survey

A walk-over field survey of the proposed wind-farm site and indicative access road lines was carried out in March 2010 to verify the findings of the desk based assessment and to identify any unrecorded features that might suffer direct or indirect impacts through construction, maintenance and decommissioning of the wind farm.

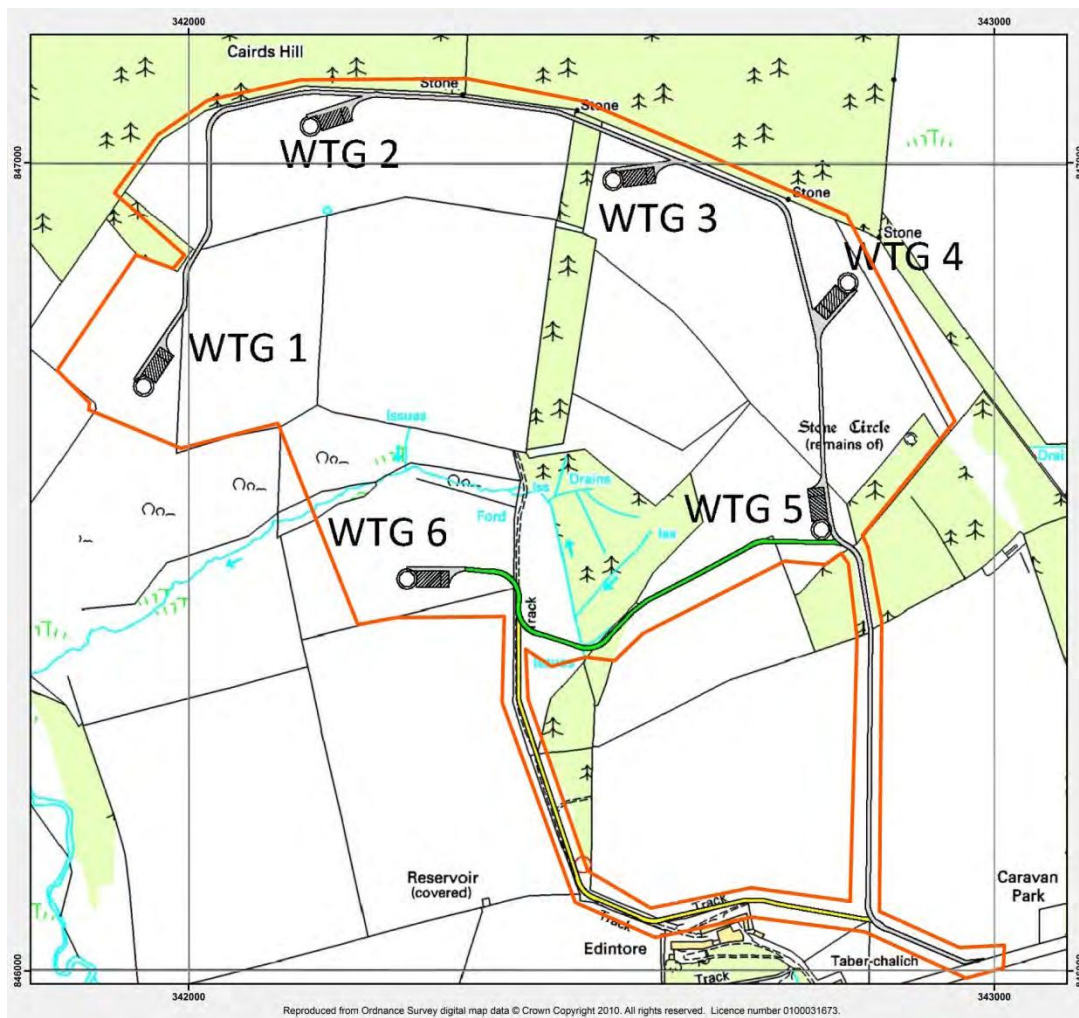


Figure 2 Baseline survey area

A Magellan Promark 3 DGPS unit was carried, set in mapping mode with satellite-based real-time correction. This equipment typically provides horizontal accuracy of 1m or less, although satellite, atmospheric and other conditions can affect this. Each turbine site was visited, but the full extent of the access tracks was not walked where it was clearly sterile of archaeology. The weather was cloudy with sunny intervals and occasional light showers, but the darkness of the clouds as the afternoon progressed reduced light levels for photography.

Results

The site was found to occupy improved arable and pasture land where any archaeological evidence is likely to have been severely truncated by many years of ploughing. This was interspersed with coniferous woodland and shelter belts. Extensive stone heaps within the edges of these wooded areas indicated past field clearance and the removal of former dry stone walls to be replaced by post and wire fencing. Soil depth appears variable, with bedrock apparently visible at one location.



Plate 1 Bedrock visible

CH1 Large stone heap

This heap of angular stone seems to have been derived from former drystone dykes which have been replaced by post and wire fences. Apart from the area plotted there is a further extensive heap in the adjoining woodland. There was no evidence of former buildings or cairns beneath.

CH2 Quarry

This quarry is apparently entirely 20th c. in origin and still in use. There are no archaeological concerns.



Plate 2 CH2: Quarry

CH3 Cairn

This cairn is almost completely destroyed. The stone has been removed, probably for building the drystone walls that themselves have now been removed. Some of it is in a heap by the fence. It seems likely that it has also been planted over with conifers although the trees have subsequently been cleared. Although this site is very damaged, its presence could indicate the existence of associated, buried features or artefacts nearby so a precautionary watching brief is recommended for turbine 5 and the access track in this area.



Plate 3 CH3: Former Cairn

CH4-7 Boundary stones

These appear to date from the early – mid 19th c.. They have a flattened front and a more rounded back face but no sign of any carving or lettering. Stone CH4 faces west, while CH5 and CH6 face

south, so it seems they define the southern boundary of the block of woodland on Caird's Hill to the north of the site. CH7 was inaccessible at the time of the survey.



Plate 4 Boundary Stone CH4

Left: from west; right: from east.

CH8 Cairn

A cairn is recorded at the same location as boundary stone CH7. However this was inaccessible at the time of the survey. If the cairn has been correctly recorded, its presence could indicate the existence of associated, buried features or artefacts nearby, so a precautionary watching brief is recommended for turbine 4 and the access track in this area.

CH9 Enclosure

An enclosure is recorded in the field adjoining the main track into the site, south of turbine 6. However a surface inspection revealed was no sign of this in the improved pasture field. No excavations are believed to be planned for this area unless the adjoining access track requires upgrading to bring in the turbines and cranes. If this is the case, a precautionary watching brief is proposed.

CH10 Farmhouse and Steading

Although not Listed, the early 19th c. farmhouse and farm buildings are interesting examples of their kind and care should be taken to avoid damage to them during construction or subsequent maintenance work.

Discussion

The site occupies improved agricultural land and any buried archaeology is likely to have been truncated by past ploughing. However there are some indications of possible Neolithic and / or Bronze Age activity. The early 19th c. farm buildings and boundary markers are worth noting also.

Impacts on the visual setting of cultural heritage features are discussed in the cultural heritage chapter of the Environmental Statement.

Recommendations

Direct impacts on recorded cultural heritage features are not expected, although there is always some potential for buried archaeology in farmland. The boundary stones should be clearly marked and safeguarded to avoid damage during construction work.

In view of the presence of one, possibly two cairns (features CH3, CH8) in the vicinity of turbines 4 and 5, topsoil removal for the access road, turbine bases, cabling and crane standings should be subject to a precautionary archaeological watching brief.

Although there is no sign on the modern surface of the recorded enclosure (CH9) by the main access track, if excavations are required in this area a watching brief should be undertaken to record any buried archaeology.

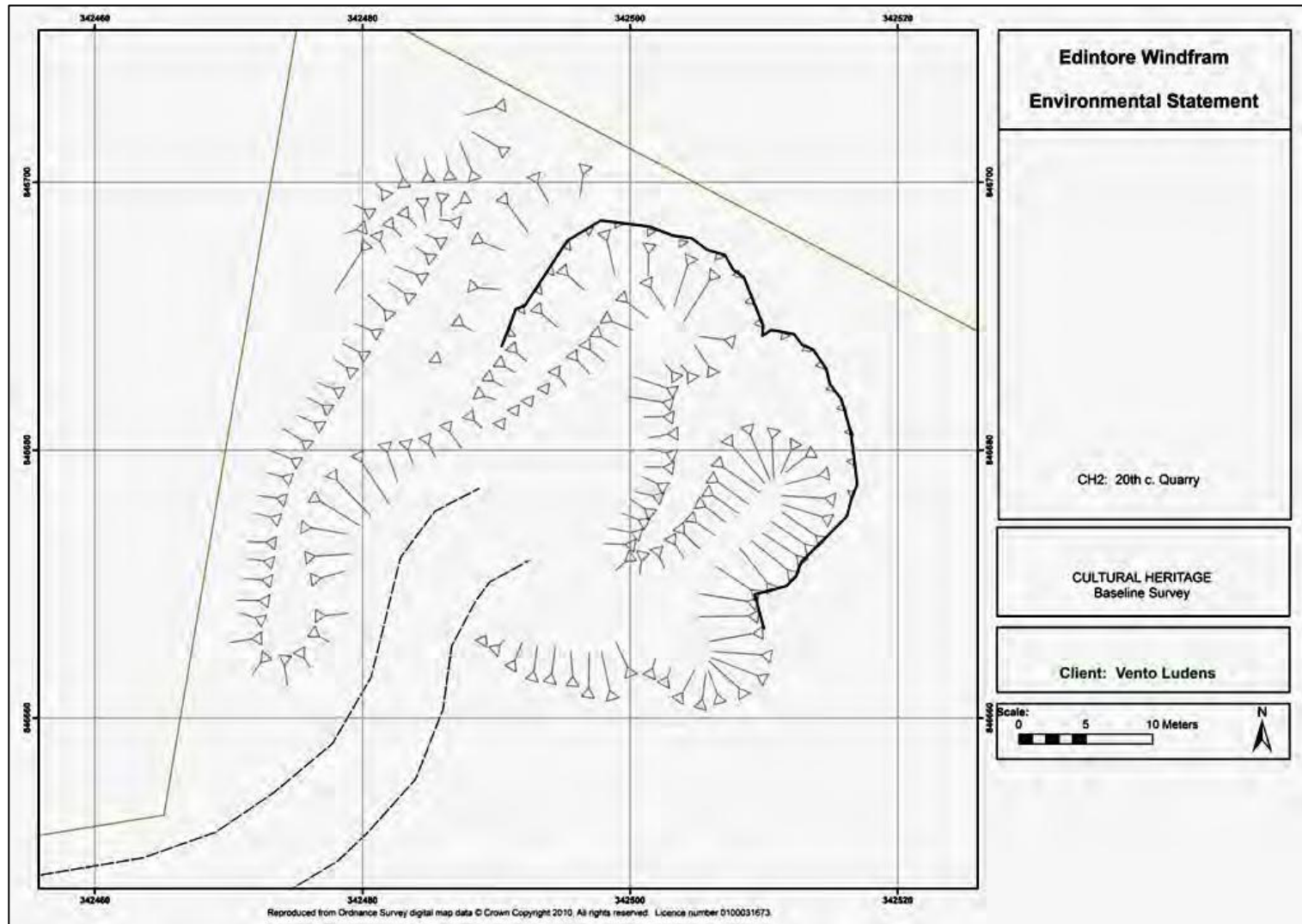


Figure 3 CH2: Quarry

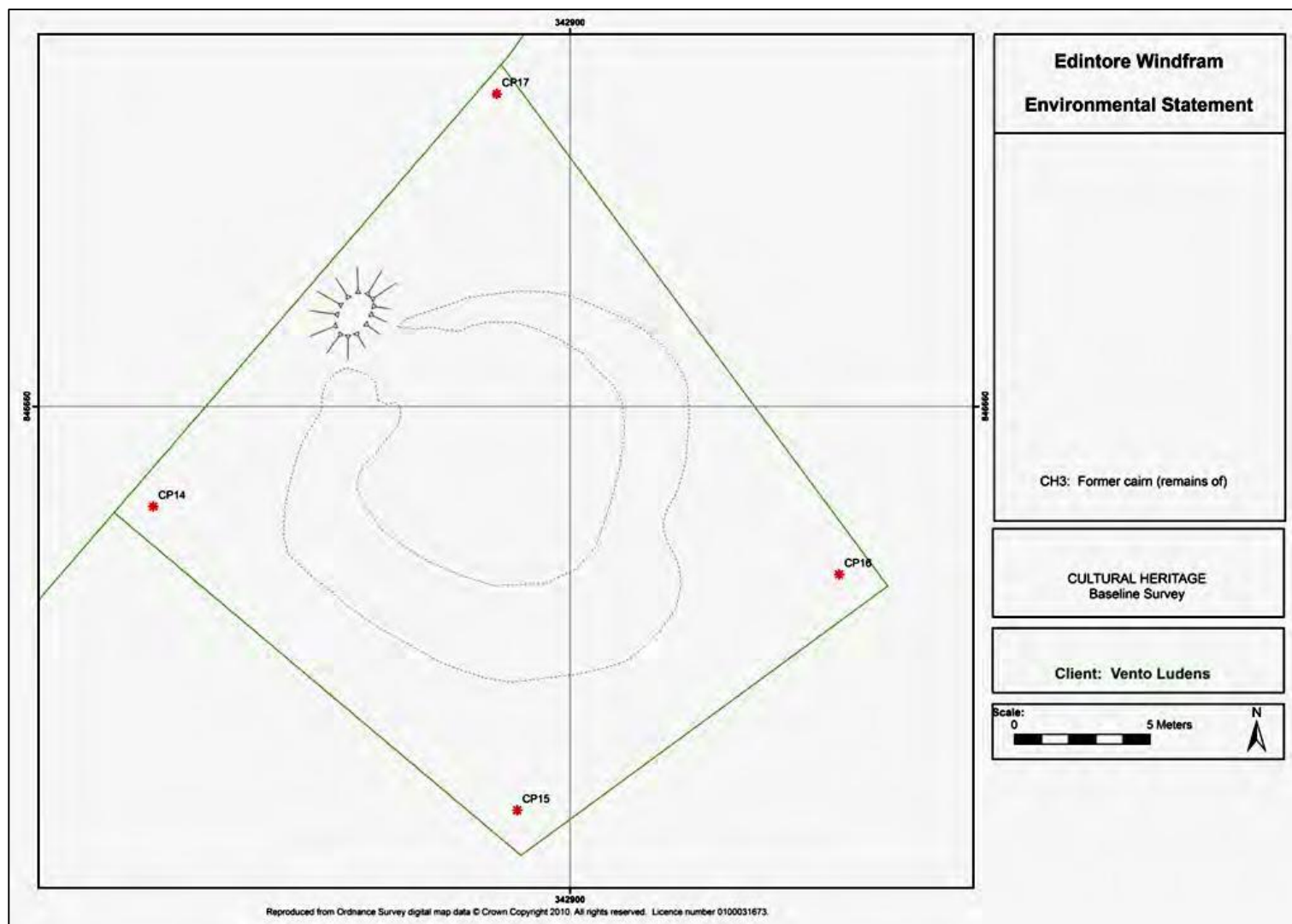


Figure 4 CH3: Cairn