



*Highland Archaeology Services Ltd*

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## **Pitairlie, Elgin Overhead Line Renewal**



## **Archaeological Watching Brief**

**7 Duke Street Cromarty Ross-shire IV11 8YH**

Tel / Fax: 01381 600491 Mobile: 07834 693378 Email: [info@hi-arch.co.uk](mailto:info@hi-arch.co.uk) Web: [www.hi-arch.co.uk](http://www.hi-arch.co.uk)

Registered in Scotland no. 262144 Registered Office: 10 Knockbreck Street, Tain, Ross-shire IV19 1BJ VAT No. GB 838 7358 80

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# Pitairlie, Elgin Overhead Line Renewal

## Archaeological Watching Brief

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<b>Author</b>	John Wood

### Summary

*A watching brief were undertaken for pole replacement work carried out by Scottish and Southern Energy on 26 November 2010. No features or finds of archaeological significance are affected and there are no recommendations for follow-up work.*

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Fieldwork was carried out by John Wood. We wish to thank Trish Morris for commissioning this work and Billy Strathee and his colleagues for their assistance on site. Ordnance Survey mapping is reproduced by permission of Landmark Information Group under Licence 100043217. Historic maps are courtesy of National Library of Scotland.

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Figure 1 General location

## Location

The replacement of three electricity poles was subject to an archaeological watching brief (see Figure 2 above). They were: Pole 44 at NJ 2440 6553; Pole 48 at NJ 2473 6549; and Pole 49 at NJ 2481 6548. The poles in between were not renewed.



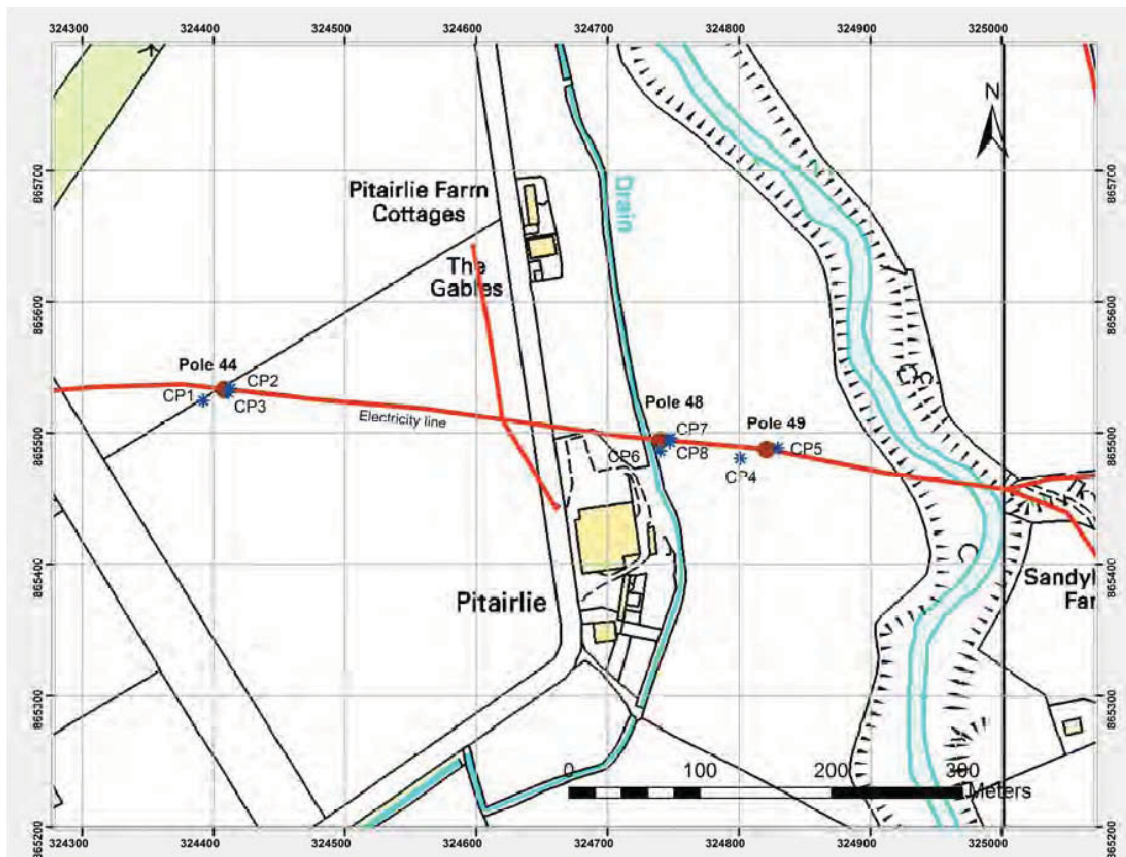


Figure 2 Pole and photo (CP) locations

## Introduction

Archaeological site visits and a watching brief were commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy to mitigate possible effects on any archaeological sites or features that might be affected by refurbishment of an electric power line at Pitairlie, Elgin.

## Background

### Legislation and Policy

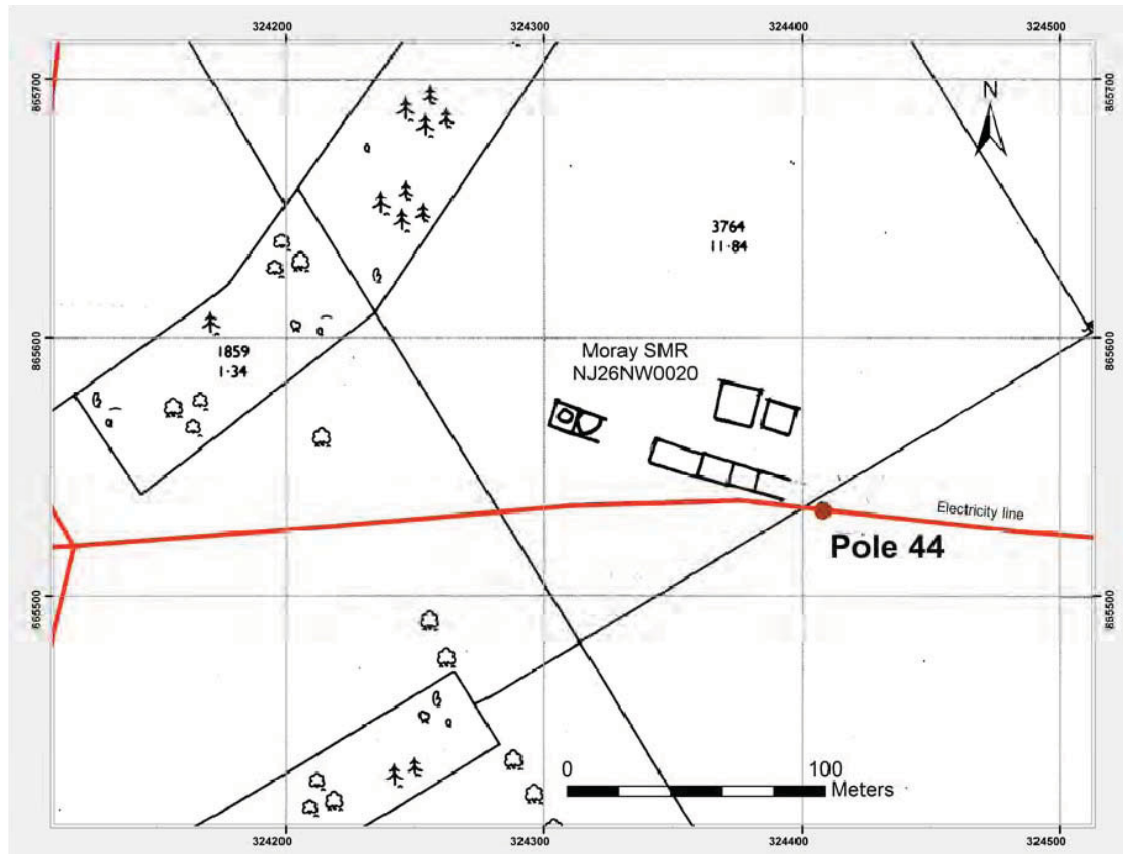
The *Electricity Act 1989*<sup>1</sup>, as amended by the *Utilities Act 2000*<sup>2</sup>, requires electricity companies to preserve 'amenity' including the cultural heritage, and to minimise impacts of new infrastructure works. The current planning and policy framework includes the Highland Council's *Structure Plan*<sup>3</sup>, and the Scottish Government's *Scottish Planning Policy* (SPP), issued in February 2010, which consolidates and

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1989/ukpga\\_19890029\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1989/ukpga_19890029_en_1)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/en/ukpgaen\\_20000027\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/en/ukpgaen_20000027_en_1)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/structureplan/thehighlandstructureplan.htm>

supersedes the previous SPP and NPPG series<sup>4</sup>. The fundamental principles underpinning UK and Scottish policies are set out in *Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2002)<sup>5</sup> and the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 1999).<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 3 Moray SMR Site NJ26NW0020: Plot of cropmarks shown on aerial photographs**  
*Courtesy of Aberdeenshire Archaeology Service*

## History and Archaeology

The electricity line runs east-west between Elgin and Lossiemouth in Moray. West of Pitairlie it runs through a field where aerial photography has identified cropmarks of square enclosures (see Figure 3 above)<sup>7</sup>. At least five square enclosures, one containing a circular cropmark were interpreted as possible square barrows. These are generally believed to be Pictish burial sites.

Many other cropmarks have been identified in the surrounding area including possible Bronze Age houses and enclosures as well as Iron Age or Pictish barrows. This free draining, sandy land with its high water

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/03132605/8>

<sup>5</sup> [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>

<sup>7</sup> Moray SMR Ref NJ26NW0020; NMRS NJ26NW37

table would have been favoured agricultural land in later prehistory. There is therefore strong potential for archaeological features to be present here.

## Desk-based assessment

A check was made of all available historical and archaeological records including the Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER), the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), the National Library of Scotland and any other available records or online resources about the pole locations.



**Figure 4** Extract from OS 6in map Elgin Sheet VIII, surveyed 1870-1

*Not reproduced to scale*

The first edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map shows that landscape has changed little in the last 140 years, apart from the planting of additional tree belts (Figure 4 above).

## Watching Brief

Three pole replacement sites were visited and the holes for the new poles were excavated under archaeological supervision using a mechanical excavator. The site and any archaeological features or finds were plotted using survey-grade Promark 3 DGPS in mapping mode using real-time satellite-based correction, and the results were then calibrated against Ordnance Survey mapping.



All fieldwork was conducted on 26 November 2010 in accordance with the *Institute for Archaeologists' Code of Conduct*<sup>8</sup>. Weather conditions were cold, with gleams of sunshine interspersed with shows of snow and hail carried in a northwesterly wind.



**Plate 1 Trench for replacement pole: Pole 44**

**Pole 44** (NJ 2440 6553)

This pole stands on the field boundary close to where square cropmarks were identified by aerial photography carried out by Aberdeenshire Archaeology Service in 1984 and 1989. A plot of the features can be seen in Figure 3 above.

A trench 450mm wide, and approximately 2m deep and 2m long, was excavated approximately 1m east of the existing pole, in line with the cables. This revealed only topsoil over clean sandy silt – no archaeological features or artefacts were seen (Plate 1 below).

Two more poles nearby were to be replaced. The excavations for these were also watched as a precautionary measure. The ground was very waterlogged at both these sites.

**Pole 48** (NJ 2473 6549)

A trench 450mm wide, and approximately 2m deep and 2m long, was excavated approximately 1m east of the existing pole in line with the cables. This revealed only clean sandy silt beneath the topsoil. (Plate 2 below).

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<sup>8</sup> IfA 2008



**Pole 49** (NJ 2481 6548)

A trench 450mm wide, and approximately 2m deep and 2m long, was excavated approximately 1m west of the existing pole, in line with the cables. This revealed only clean sand beneath the topsoil. (Plate 3 below).



**Plate 2** Trench for replacement pole 48



**Plate 3** trench for replacement pole 49

## Conclusions and Recommendations

There were no archaeological features or finds uncovered during the watching brief, although the area has a large number of recorded cropmarks, possibly representing archaeological features.

There are no recommendations for further work.

## References

*National Library of Scotland Historic Map collection*, accessed at <http://maps.nls.uk/index.html>

*National Monuments Record and Moray SMR* accessed through <http://rcahms.gov.uk>

## APPENDIX: Index of Photographs

Photographs are located in Figure 2 above

Photo No.	Location	Direction	Subject	Taken by	Date
DSC_0001	CP1	ENE	Pole 44	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0002	CP1	NNE	Pole 44	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0003	CP1	N	View across cropmark area	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0004	CP1	WNW	View across cropmark area	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0005	CP1	WSW	General view	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0006	CP2	WSW	Trench for replacement pole 44	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0007	CP2	WSW	Trench for replacement pole 44	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0008	CP3	WNW	Trench for replacement pole 44	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0009	CP2	WSW	Trench for replacement pole 44	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0010	CP4	ENE	Pole 49	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0011	CP4	W	View along line	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0012	CP4	E	Pole preparation	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0013	CP5	W	Trench for replacement pole 49	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0014	CP5	W	Trench for replacement pole 49	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0015	CP6	W	Trench for replacement pole 48	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0016	CP7	W	Trench for replacement pole 48	JW	26/11/2010
DSC_0017	CP8	N	Pole erection - pole 48	JW	26/11/2010