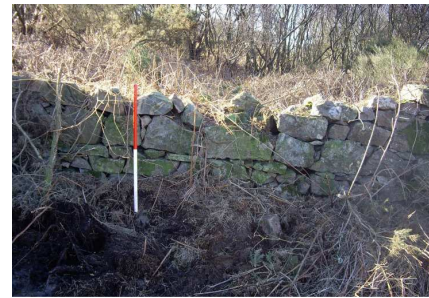


REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT NESS FARM AND TULLOS HILL LANDFILL SITE, NIGG, ABERDEEN. Phase II

NGR NJ 9559 0355



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SUMMARY

Between March and September 2010, representatives of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with Phase II of developments relating to the closure of the landfill site at Ness Farm and Tullos Hill, Coast Road, Nigg, Aberdeen (NGR NJ 9559 0355). The area is rich in archaeological remains, the earliest, of prehistoric origin, are among the most important prehistoric archaeological features in Aberdeen, with other periods represented by features relating to post medieval agricultural improvements, and Second World War structural remains (Cameron 2008). Numerous features relating to these periods of land use were encountered during Phase I of the landfill closure operations (Peters 2009). The archaeologically sensitive nature of the site, combined with the need to close the landfill sites sensitively and safely, necessitated the archaeological monitoring of Phase II of the development works. All archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with the relevant archaeological strategy appendix, outlined as a condition of planning consent, and approved by the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council (Appendix 1), and in accordance with best practice and professional standards condoned by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2002).

The watching brief monitored the clearance and scraping of land for an attenuation pond and new pedestrian access track, clearances for the widening of existing track ways and the excavation of channels for drainage, recording any features uncovered during the groundworks.

The watching brief monitoring encountered a total of six features, five relating to post-medieval agricultural land-use of the area. Two were dry stone walls, two drainage ditches, and the other was a stone gully. The other feature relates to modern use of the area and was a concrete post and wire fence.

This watching brief has formed the final stage of archaeological works required on site in relation to Phase II of the present development. Parts of Phase III of the landfill closure scheme will require further archaeological supervision, upon advice from the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit would like to thank Aberdeen City Council for commissioning the project. In addition, further thanks are extended to the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council for all advice relating to the project, and to all the Fairhurst and Les Taylor Group on-site staff for all their help and information.

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Dave Harding and Cat Peters. The report and the accompanying illustrations were prepared by Cat Peters, and the project was managed by Alison Cameron and Judith Stones, Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Aberdeen City Council has decided to close the landfill site at Ness Farm and Tullos Hill, requiring a programme of groundworks to ensure a safe closure. The development site (Ness Farm and Tullos Hill Landfill site), centred on NGR NJ 9559 0355, has been subjected to various previous archaeological works (Cameron 2008), as the area is rich in archaeological remains, housing some of the most important prehistoric sites in Aberdeen. As a result, an archaeological strategy was submitted for the works, stating that all excavation works undertaken in areas not affected by modern landfill should be monitored by an archaeologist (Cameron 2008). This scheme was supported by the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council. The scheme of works is in-line with government advice as set out in the National Planning Policy Guideline No. 5, Archaeology and Planning. All stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IfA 2002).
- 1.1.2 This report comprises the results of the archaeological monitoring of the relevant groundworks associated with the development, as outlined in the archaeological strategy report.
- 1.1.3 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with best practice and professional standards, and with current UKIC guidelines (1990). The archive will be deposited at Aberdeen City Council in the first instance, and a copy of the report given to Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request. The project is also registered with the **Online Access to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS)**.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1.1 The site is centred upon National Grid Reference NJ 9559 0355, at Ness Farm and Tullos Hill Landfill site, Nigg, to the south-east of the centre of the city of Aberdeen. The site lies in an area of rough high ground near the coast, ranging from between approximately 40 and 80m AOD. The whole of the landfill site encloses an area of approximately 1km², not all of which has been covered by landfill, and not all covered by landfill at the same period (Figure 1). The land consisted of tracts of rough heather and gorse upland, interspersed with areas of more dense tree coverage and moor-like grasslands. Trackways and roads existed for public access and vehicular access for council and associated workforce access.

2.2 GENERAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.2.1 A large number of known archaeological features have been identified in the environs of the landfill site, outlined in the original archaeological strategy for the whole project (Cameron 2008). These include important prehistoric sites, in the form of at least four large stone cairns forming the remains of an important Bronze Age cairn cemetery, all of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments with designated protected exclusion zones. Prehistoric hut circles and associated field systems are also known, particularly in the northern part of the site.
- 2.2.2 Post-medieval land improvement features are also known from the area, including consumption dykes, one of which is in the process of being scheduled, and field clearance cairns, all relating to intensified farming in the region. Early Ordnance Survey Mapping also reveals further evidence for pre-existing features on-site with farm buildings and other buildings of unknown origin depicted in various locations across the hillside. The 20th century is also represented archaeologically, with concrete hut bases once forming part of an Ack-Ack Battery, later converted into a Prisoner of War Camp with associated features, look-out posts and other defensive World War II related structures. Numerous archaeological features relating to these periods of land-use were encountered during Phase I of the landfill closure operations (Peters 2009).
- 2.2.3 The northern part of the development site, the area affected by Phase II operations (Figure 1) was known to have formed part of pre-existing farmland, and as well as the potential for early archaeological deposits surviving sub-surface, there remained the likelihood that sub-surface agricultural features may have survived *in-situ*.

3. RESULTS

3.1 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

- 3.1.1 The watching brief was carried out between 8th March and 13th September 2010. It monitored the excavation of various stages of the groundworks on site, in accordance with the archaeological strategy based upon the initial site closure plans for the site (Cameron 2008) and in accordance with more Phase II-specific methodologies (Appendix 1). The results of the monitoring are outlined below. All archaeological features located during the works are summarised in Appendix 2.

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

- 3.2.1 ***Clearance and soil scrape for new attenuation pond:*** this stage of the groundworks occurred in the far north-western area of the Phase II operations area (Figure 1). It involved an initial site walkover survey prior to groundworks commencing to establish whether any existing features survived in the area due to be affected. The survey located a total of six features, the first, a linear gully, of maximum 1m width, which largely followed the site boundary for a distance of 90m, though it continued south-westwards out of the attenuation pond area (Figure 2).



Plate 1: Feature 1 facing south-west

- 3.2.2 A similar feature was located adjoining Feature 1 that was up to 2m in width in places and was east-west aligned, leading from the existing track way to Feature 1 (Figure 2). It ran for a distance of 45m (Feature 2; Plate 2).



Plate 2: Feature 2 (foreground) meeting Feature 1 facing west

- 3.2.3 The third feature encountered was a stone-built arched structure 1.2m in height and 2m in width (Feature 3) and was located at the far north-western corner of the Phase II operational area (Figure 2). Features 1 and 2 ran into it, and it was a stone gully, relating to drainage of the site perhaps when the area was still largely agricultural (Plate 3). Features 1 and 2 were soakaways or drains to carry the water through the gully, under the railway and out of the site.



Plate 3: Feature 3 facing north-west

- 3.2.4 Immediately to the east of Feature 3 and running for a distance of approximately 10m was the remains of a concrete post and wire boundary fence which must have once formed the boundary of the site with the railway beyond (Feature 4; Plate 4).



Plate 4: Feature 4 facing east

- 3.2.5 To the south-west of the attenuation pond area, beyond the existing access track was a surviving stretch of dry stone wall, within the area thought to have been largely obliterated by modern landfill (Feature 5). This averaged 0.4m in width and continued, though in varying states of decay, to a distance of 50m (Figure 2; Plate 5). This must have been a rare survivor of a field boundary from the days when the land was agricultural. This has since been removed.



Plate 5: Feature 5 facing north-west

- 3.2.6 The last feature probably once adjoined Feature 5 to create one long wall, but had since been unattached by the provision of a track way. Feature 6 was a north-west south-east aligned stretch of dry stone wall (Plate 6), in places surviving up to a height of 1m at most and 0.45m at least and a width of 0.9m at most and 0.4m at least across an overall distance of 97m, although there was a 3m gap which provided recent access to a gas venting post (Figure 2). This wall was demolished as part of the trackway widening process.



Plate 6: Feature 6 facing north-west

- 3.2.7 Once the archaeological features were recorded, the next phase of groundworks for the new attenuation pond was for the area to be cleared of trees and shrubs (Figures 2 and 3), and then the area was stripped of topsoil to reveal a mid-orange sandy natural (Plate 7). No archaeological features were observed.



Plate 7: Topsoil scrape for new attenuation pond, facing west

- 3.2.8 **Clearance and soil scrape for access track widening:** the access track leading down to the new attenuation pond needed widening to ease vehicular access. This involved the initial clearance and removal of shrubs and also Feature 6, the dry stone wall, of an area 2m in width across a distance of approximately 262m immediately adjacent to the existing track (Figure 3). The mid-orange sandy natural was observed in places, but only a maximum depth of 0.15m was removed (Plate 8). No archaeological features were observed during these groundworks.



Plate 8: Scrape for access track widening, facing north-east

- 3.2.9 **Drainage Excavations:** the main drainage excavations occurred across the northern boundary of the site, and covered a distance of approximately 700m (Figure 3). This drainage gully had a depth of between 2.2m and 4.5m and was 2m in width. Due to the depth of these excavations, boxes were inserted as the dig progressed to prevent collapse, meaning that monitoring was restricted (Plate 9). Despite this, a mid-orange sandy natural was observed in places. No archaeological features were encountered. The eastern part of the dig was within an area of landfill. The leachate drainage, which was excavated to the south of the drainage gully, was within the landfill, and did not reach the bottom of it, and so these excavations were not monitored.



Plate 9: Drainage gully under excavation, facing east

- 3.2.10 A further smaller drainage gully was necessary to the north and west of the widened access track, as bad weather had caused flooding (Figure 3). This measured 25m north-east to south-west and was a maximum of 1.2m in width and 1.2m in depth. This revealed a shallow topsoil of up to 0.25m on top of a mid-orange sandy natural (Plate 10).



Plate 10: Small drainage gully under excavation, facing south-east

3.2.11 ***Clearance and soil scrape for new pedestrian access track:*** the final groundworks to be monitored by the archaeological watching brief were those relating to the new pedestrian access track just to the north of the drainage gully along the northern boundary of the site, to the south of the railway embankment (Figure 3). The area was a maximum of 3.2m in width and approximately 430m in length, up to the railway bridge. The clearance revealed only a pre-existing drainage manhole cover and the remains of a gravelled path. The scrape was a maximum of 0.2m in depth and did not extend beyond the topsoil (Plate 11). The dry stone wall which must have once formed the boundary between Ness Farm and the railway land, survived, and was not disturbed by the new pedestrian access track works.



Plate 11: Topsoil scrape for new pedestrian access track facing east

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief monitoring encountered a total of six features, five relating to post medieval agricultural land-use of the area, and probably of 19th century origin. Unfortunately, two dry stone walls no longer survive as a result of this development, but the boundary wall between Ness Farm and the railway's land is a good surviving example of this kind of feature on the site. The other features were two drainage ditches and one stone-built gully. The gully has been utilised by the new developments, and the ditch which ran across the site boundary (Feature 1) still survives. The other feature was a modern concrete post and wire fence and no longer survives.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.2.1 This watching brief has formed the final stage of archaeological works required on site in relation to Phase II of the present development. Parts of Phase III of the landfill closure scheme will require further archaeological supervision, upon advice from the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council.

5. REFERENCES

- Cameron, A. (2008) 'Ness Farm and Tullos Hill Landfill Closures: Archaeological Strategy'. *Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit: Unpublished report*
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- Stones, J. (2009) 'Land to the North of Doonies Farm, Coast Road/Loirston Road-Formation of Attenuation Basin and Access Road'. *Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Specification: Unpublished report*
- UKIC (1990), *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage*

APPENDIX 1: ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRATEGY

NESS FARM AND TULLOS HILL LANDFILL SITES ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRATEGY PHASE II

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document forms an Appendix (Appendix 1) to the original Ness Farm and Tullos Hill Landfill Closures Archaeological Strategy produced by Alison Cameron, Assistant Archaeologist for Aberdeen City Council in May 2008. More general information on the overall project is outlined in that report. This document specifically deals with the archaeological requirements for groundworks planned in Spring 2010, predominantly occurring within Phase II of the overall scheme (the locations of which are illustrated in Figure 1 accompanying this document).
- 1.2 Although the Phase II area itself contains few known archaeological features, the wider environs contain prehistoric features of national importance, one of which will be affected by the Phase II operations (Phase I Snagging at Cat Cairn). In addition, although the area was surveyed in 2001 by CFA Archaeology, conditions at the time mean that there remains the potential for features not located during the survey to survive.
- 1.3 This report is written on the basis of understandings of the planned developments as at March 2010. Any alterations to those planned developments, however minor, must be reported to Judith Stones, Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council. Phase II operations require several different areas where archaeological input will be required. These are outlined individually below.

2. PHASE I SNAGGING AT CAT CAIRN

- 2.1 **Methodology:** operations in the vicinity of Cat Cairn during Phase I have left outstanding requirements at Cat Cairn. The existing trackway needs to be formalised, with extra topsoil deposited at the base of the new kissing gate to raise the ground level in that area.
- 2.2 **Archaeological requirements:** due to the sensitivity of this site, and the fact that it lies within a protected scheduled area, no work must occur here before the necessary permissions are in place from Historic Scotland. In addition, no personnel or machinery must stray from the existing tracks during the operations, and without archaeological supervision. It is understood that Historic Scotland have given permission for these operations to occur during the last two weeks of April. No vehicle should enter the scheduled area before then. In addition, it is anticipated that a site meeting should occur between a representative of Historic Scotland, the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council, the project archaeologist and representatives of Fairhurst and Les Taylor, to formalise understandings of the requirements in this area due to its particular significance and sensitivity. This meeting must occur prior to works taking place.

3. PHASE II ACCESS TRACK WIDENING

- 3.1 **Methodology:** in order to provide access to the Woodgroup corner area of the site, it will be necessary for the existing trackway to be widened and formalised. This will involve the removal of the topsoil by toothless ditching bucket of a 2m width area immediately adjacent to the existing route, and the deposition of a make-up hardcore deposit.
- 3.2 **Archaeological requirements:** due to the potential for archaeological deposits or features to survive in this area, all clearance and topsoil removal relating to these operations will require archaeological supervision. In addition, a survivor from previous agricultural land use of the area survives in the form of a dry stone dyke which runs adjacent to the track at its northernmost line. This will be destroyed by the 2m widening of the track, and must be recorded first by an archaeologist.

4. PHASE II ATTENUATION POND AT WOODGROUP CORNER

- 4.1 **Methodology:** a new attenuation pond is planned at the Woodgroup Corner area of the site. This will require the initial clearance of trees and shrubs from the area, and the removal of topsoil before the subsequent excavations/ levelling or heightening of the pond area, as it lies on a natural slope.
- 4.2 **Archaeological requirements:** the area due to be cleared must first be subjected to an archaeological walkover survey in order that any features surviving in this area are recorded prior to clearance operations taking place. In addition, regardless of whether any archaeological features are located, the topsoil removal must be undertaken under archaeological supervision to natural, so that any archaeological features will be visible. If none are found, it may be that further excavations within this attenuation pond area will not require archaeological monitoring.

5. PHASE II DRAINAGE EXCAVATION

- 5.1 **Methodology:** new drainage is required for the Ness Farm Landfill area. This will require the excavation at the foot of the batter area, adjacent to the railway line.
- 5.2 **Archaeological requirements:** as the drainage excavation will occur outside the area of existing landfill, there is the potential for archaeological deposits to be disturbed. All drainage excavations will therefore require archaeological supervision.

6. PHASE II PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TRACK

- 6.1 **Methodology:** a new pedestrian access track will be provided from the north-western edge of the Woodgroup Corner area, to the railway bridge, adjacent to the drainage gully, to its north.
- 6.2 **Archaeological requirements:** as this will be outside the landfill area, there is the potential for archaeological deposits to survive, and to be encountered during the operations. In addition, if the pedestrian access track requires the removal of any part of an existing dry stone dyke boundary, time must be allocated for the archaeological recording of the feature. Any preliminary clearances, as well as the topsoil scrape likely to be necessary for the construction of the access track, must be undertaken under archaeological supervision.

7. GENERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDANCE

- 7.1 **Timetable:** a timetable must be agreed in advance for the various stages of work so that the presence of an archaeologist can be assured and to allow for monitoring by the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology.
- 7.2 **Archaeological Features:** should archaeological features be encountered during the works, the archaeologist must be given enough time to record them before work can continue. If the features are of further significance, further advice will be required. The Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology must be kept informed in the first instance of all developments.
- 7.3 **Human Remains:** any human remains which are encountered must initially be left *in situ*. Their removal will be a matter of discussion with the Keeper, Archaeology (who must be notified within 12 hours of their discovery) and will comply with the provisions of Scots Law.
- 7.4 **Health and Safety /Public Liability Insurance:** all archaeologists will be inducted upon their first visit to the site and will conform to all Site Health and Safety policies and directives. All archaeologists are also CSCS cardholders.
- 7.5 **Archaeological Reporting Requirements:** all monitoring will be documented on a daily basis, with digital photographic records kept of all archaeological supervision undertaken. Any finds of major significance must be reported immediately to the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology. The archaeologist must provide a formal professional report on the watching brief within 4 weeks of the end of the fieldwork. If any additional archaeological survey or excavation is

required, a full report on that work must also be provided. Copies of the report should be sent to the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology, SITA (UK) Ltd and W A Fairhurst & Partners. A brief survey of results should be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, along with the appropriate fee. An OASIS report must also be provided. All work will be undertaken to IFA standards using accepted best practice methodologies.

Additional information is available from:

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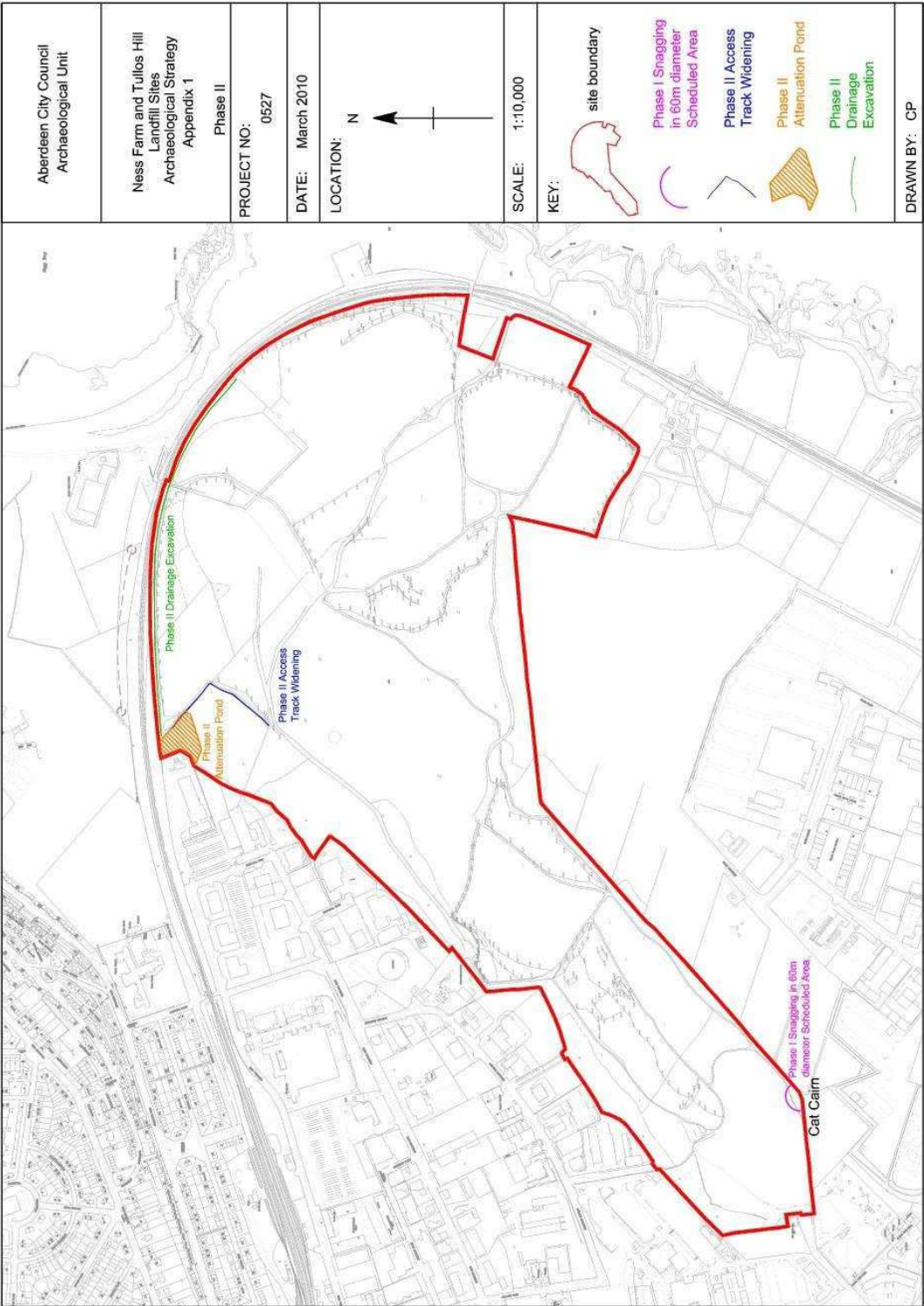


Figure 1 : Archaeological Strategy Appendix 1 Plan Showing Proposed Works Occurring during Spring 2010

APPENDIX 2: FEATURE INDEX

The table below summarises the archaeological features located during the monitoring of the Phase II groundworks at the Ness Farm and Tullos Hill Landfill site.

Feature No.	Location	Description	Interpretation	Date	Associated Illustration
1	Attenuation pond area	Ditch 1m wide and 90m long	Drainage ditch	Post-medieval; 19 th century	Plate 1; Figure 2
2	Attenuation pond area	Ditch maximum 2m wide and 45m long	Drainage ditch	Post-medieval; 19 th century	Plate 2; Figure 2
3	North-west corner of Phase II area	Stone-built archway 1.2m high and 2m wide	Stone drainage gully	Post-medieval; 19 th century	Plate 3; Figure 2
4	Attenuation pond area	Concrete post and wire fence running distance of 10m	Old boundary fence	20 th century	Plate 4; Figure 2
5	South-west of access track	Dry stone wall 50m long and 0.4m wide	Old field boundary	Post-medieval; 19 th century	Plate 5; Figure 2
6	West of access track	Dry stone wall 97m long, up to 1m high and up to 0.9m wide	Old field boundary	Post-medieval; 19 th century	Plate 6; Figure 2

APPENDIX 3: FIGURES

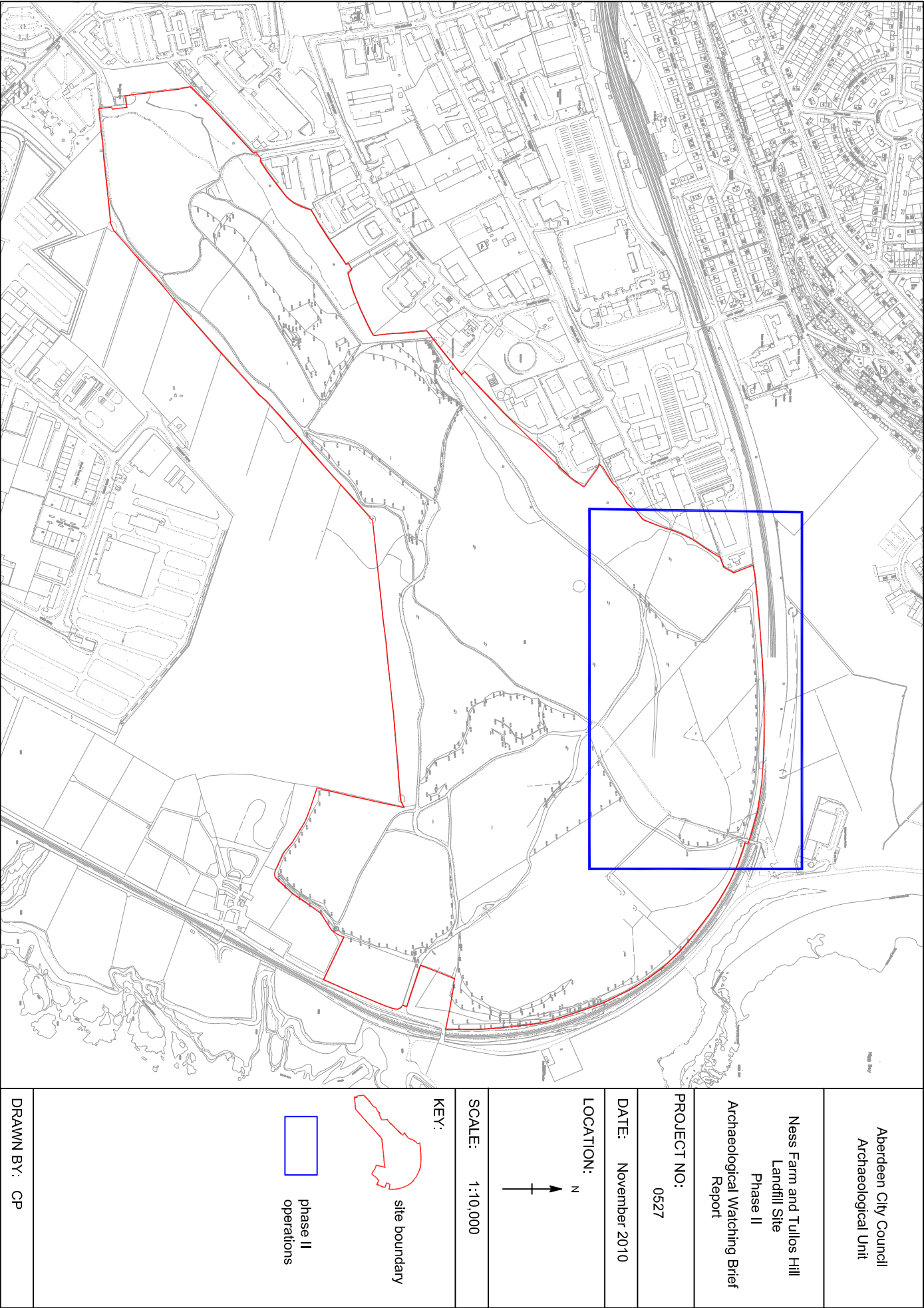


Figure 1 : Location of Operations Monitored during Phase II

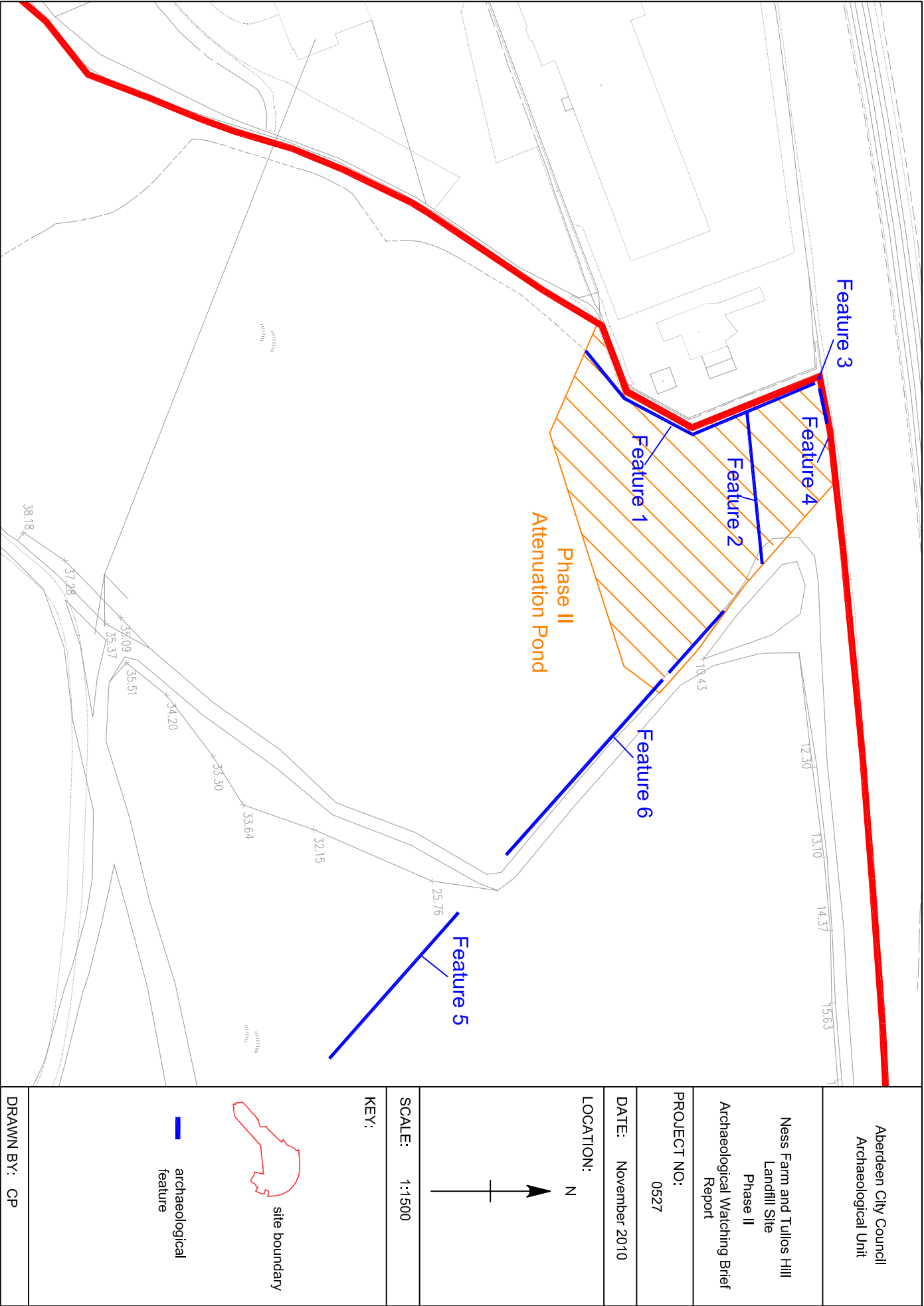


Figure 2 : Results of Initial Walkover Survey

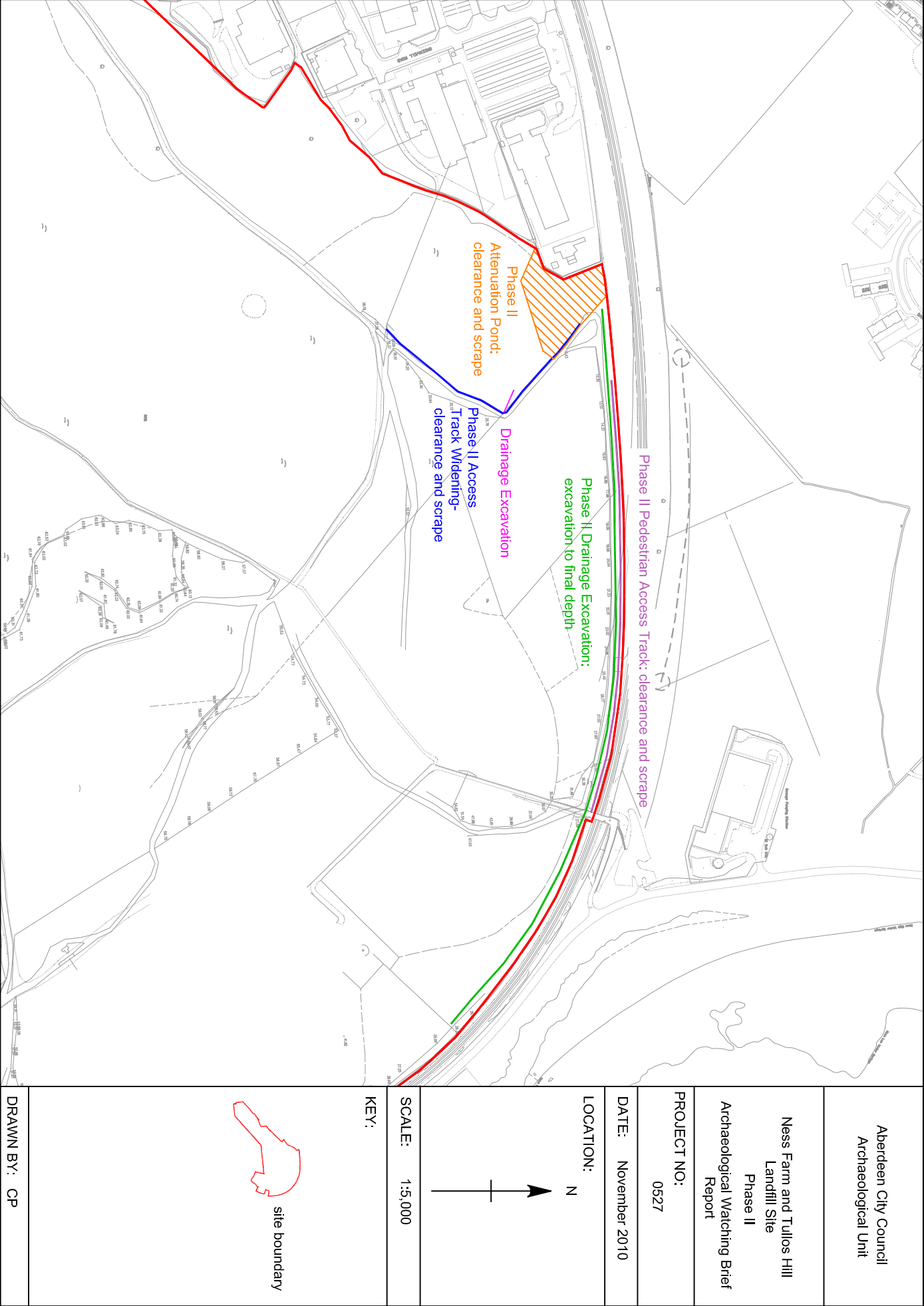


Figure 3 : Works Monitored during Archaeological Watching Brief